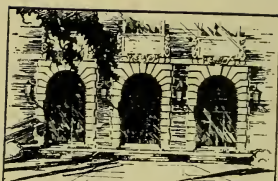






*Henry Sherbrooke Esq.  
Orton.*





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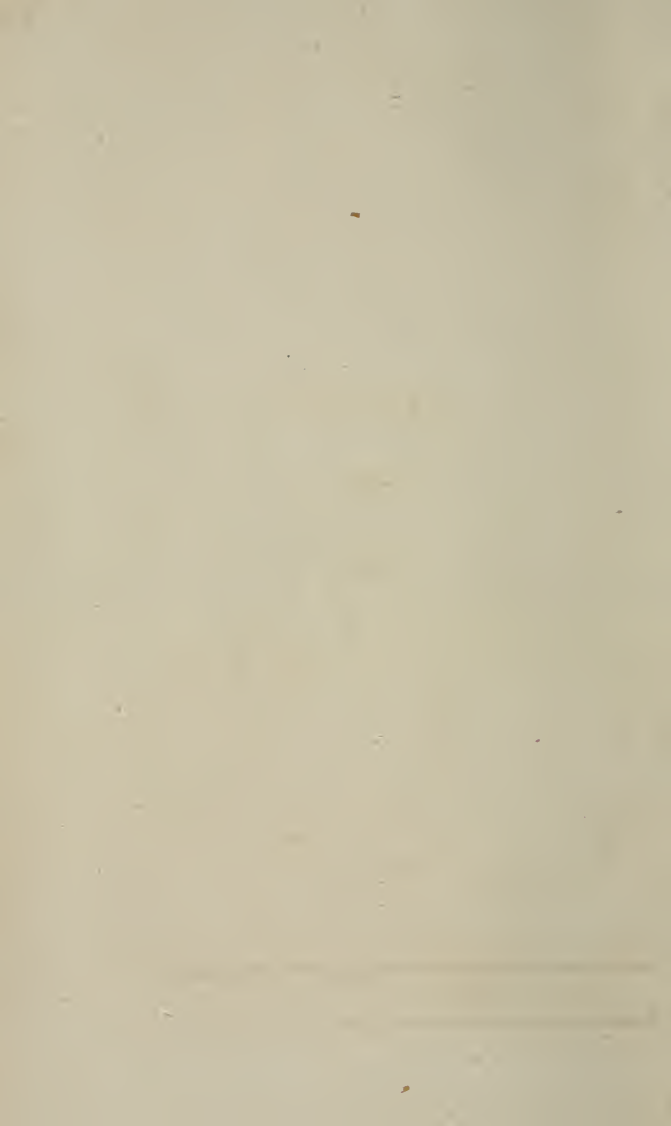
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v. 2



A. C. Hubbrook







# J E S S Y.



A TALE.

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# JESSY;

OR, THE

## ROSE OF DONALD'S COTTAGE.

A Tale.

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IN FOUR VOLUMES.

---

BY THE AUTHOR OF THE BRAVO OF BOHEMIA, &c.

---

'Tis Nature's most inviolable law,  
To make each species propagate its kind :  
The generous offspring from the generous stock  
Derive the virtues, and confess the sire.

HIGGON.

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VOL. II.

London:

*Printed at the Minerva Press for*

A. K. NEWMAN AND CO. LEADENHALL-STREET.

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# JESSY.

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## CHAPTER I.

---

**I**N three days from the above period Charles embarked, and it was nearly a week after the papers had announced the sailing of the fleet from the Channel, that Helen's mind reverted to the meeting she had witnessed between her friend and the forlorn child of guilt and sorrow. Her pity was again awakened, and she almost regretted that she had not urged Charles to tell her if there was no way in which she might contribute to her comforts, without its being

made known from whence the succour came; but her mind had been too much engrossed by his departure to leave her an opportunity of doing so, and she feared even he might accuse her of unfeeling conduct. Yet he had doubtless relieved her wants, unless, indeed (which it now occurred might have been the case), that he also, in the hurry of his own business, might have forgotten the appointment he must have made for that purpose by giving her his address.

Deeply interested in the subject, she scarcely noticed the air of dejection with which Archibald, who at that moment entered the room, addressed her; but as it was not his intention to let it pass unobserved, he threw an additional gloom into his countenance, and assumed an air of absent thoughtfulness, which could not fail to excite her attention—"Are you ill, Archibald?" she inquired, with her usual kindness.

"Not in body, my sister," was the answer;

answer ; “ but, goaded by an instance of ingratitude that has unmanned me, and which it will take some time to reconcile me to, I have already seen so much of the world as to be convinced how little dependence is to be placed on the most specious characters. But there are some *forms*,” he added, “ under which we cannot bear to be deceived, and of such a nature is that which has caused the chagrin I wanted art enough to conceal from your affectionate penetration.”

“ Indeed,” she replied, “ I sympathize too sincerely in all your feelings not deeply to regret you should have experienced ingratitude under any form, for I hold no vice in such utter detestation; yet we are not justified in condemning the whole world because one being in it has deceived us; but friendship is a solace under every veil, and your confidence in my affection may lessen that of which you now complain.”

“ The circumstances, my dear Helen,

are aggravated by the conviction that I dare not reveal them to you ; still less must Dorville become the repository of my confidence——”

“ And Charles,” she said, interrupting him, “ from whom I know you have no secrets, is far away.”

Looking steadfastly at her, he replied —“ On what foundation, Helen, do you rest that assertion ?”

“ Upon a knowledge of your early attachment to each other,” she returned, “ and his known integrity.”

“ But time frequently changes our sentiments, and Charles, of late, has been shy of my confidence : perhaps he suspects I have promoted Dorville’s cause.”

“ That is impossible,” said Helen, “ for to this moment he is a stranger to your friend’s offer, nor do I wish him ever to know it was made, since Dorville’s recent conduct induced me to trust he has already conquered the preference with which he honoured me.”

“ To superficial observers he no doubt  
has ;

has; but the shades of night, Helen—the bosom of friendship, bear testimony still to his unconquerable attachment. Dreading the loss of even your cold esteem, and existing in your presence only—'tis then he assumes the form of friendship, to conceal the despair that preys upon his constitution. Helen, you know not the heart you have rejected—the man so devoted to you.”

“ I know sufficient of him, Archibald,” she replied, “ to appreciate his worth : I believe him to be a very excellent young man ; but if you are interested in my future happiness, 'tis in another cause, not his, you must be thus eloquent. Could my revered father speak from the cold mansion of death, he would sanction the attachment of Charles Moncrief to his Helen ; my own heart has long since done so, and you, his early, long-loved friend, can never cease to espouse his cause.”

“ It was a test, Helen,” he coolly re-  
B 3 turned,

turned, “ which I had hoped would have been spared me ; I would have trusted that Charles had too much spirit—too much generosity, to have aspired to your fortune while his own was unmade. I knew that Dorville, with a splendid establishment in view, could have equally contributed to your happiness, and to him I had most ardently desired to see the preference given. Still, if Charles is to be the favoured lover—if Dorville’s ruin must be the result of his success, I can only regret that I ever introduced him to you—still more that I ventured to assure him I believed your affections entirely free. I am even yet too much the friend of Moncrief to lessen him unjustly in your good opinion ; but I have also, from the best motives, espoused Dorville’s cause too warmly (not suspecting your attachment), to refuse the only boon he now solicits, and which you, in pity to his sufferings, cannot withhold—permission to obtain sir Arthur’s

thur's consent to his endeavouring, by perseverance, yet to gain that return so necessary to his peace; for, believing you disengaged, he has persuaded himself that you may at last be induced to pity him."

"That I most sincerely do," she replied, "if he has indeed so far deceived himself as to the state of my affections. But any appeal to sir Arthur will be unavailing; it rests not with him to force my hand, and when it is given with my own approbation, be assured it will not be to Dorville."

"Then you must acknowledge yourself to be engaged already."

"Neither was that my intention," she said, "until I became my own mistress; but if compelled to make the avowal at present, it will be in favour of Charles Moncrief."

"The only plan, then," said the subtle Archibald, "to deceive both parties, and veil your own sentiments respecting



Charles, will be to allow Dorville an interview with sir Arthur upon the subject; his attentions to you can be no injury to Moncrief's cause while he is secure of your affection, and his return will enable you openly to avow what sir Arthur does not at present even suspect."

"If I have unhappily been the source of pain to Dorville," said the generous Helen, "I can have no right to add injustice to it; if, therefore, it will be more satisfaction to know my opinion in sir Arthur's presence, I shall not shrink from the declaration which must be the result of such an interview; for neither a guardian's authority, in a point so essential to my own peace, and that of a friend still dearer to me, nor the unwearied perseverance of Dorville, can alter my fixed determination. Had I never known Charles Moncrief, I have as yet seen no man with whom I would so willingly have united my destiny as  
Dorville;



Dorville; I can now only wish him that happiness it is no longer in my power to promote."

"But you consent to his seeing your guardian?"

"Certainly," she replied, "if, when my sentiments are made known, he still wishes it."

Not many days had elapsed before the sagacious smiles and important looks of sir Arthur convinced Helen the interview had taken place: she was summoned with an air of secrecy to his library, and the liberal offer, handsome settlement, and great advantages of a union with the elegant and accomplished Dorville, explained with indefatigable zeal by the interested guardian, who was already prepared for the deep character allotted him in the nefarious business.

Helen, with submissive attention, listened to the detail, and having assured sir Arthur, not only of her high estimation for Dorville, but the sense she

had of the honour he had intended her, firmly rejected his overtures.

Pretending astonishment he did not feel, he seriously asked, if she was really sensible of the honour, and actually esteemed Mr. Dorville, upon what foundation she could refuse him? and she firmly replied, of having no affection to return, hers having long since been engaged——

“And that without my approbation, Miss Douglas?” said sir Arthur: “surely you have not treated me as a friend, or the object must be too unworthy to have obtained my consent.”

“Neither, sir Arthur,” she returned, respectfully, “was exactly the case: not wishing to marry before I came of age, it was unnecessary to trouble you upon the subject of my intentions; but the man who was, by his early virtues, endeared to my lamented father—to my revered mother—he whom they would have chosen for their child, had nothing to fear from sir Arthur Moreland’s refusal

fusal of him as a husband for his ward. You are too well acquainted with Mr. Moncrief, sir," she added, "to require my saying more."

Wiping his forehead with well-dissembled agitation, and taking her hand, he replied—"Helen, this confession, altogether unexpected, has placed me in a very awkward situation; it recalls a circumstance which I now reproach myself for ever having concealed from you, and yet I thought it immaterial, until I saw any chance of your honoured father's fears being realized; and I must own that I always supposed you would look up to such a connexion as Mr. Dorville's, in preference to a young man who had neither birth nor fortune to give you consequence, but who is nevertheless a very worthy character, and one to whom I can have no objection, as a friend, for your brother."

When he had ceased speaking, Helen, who thought it unnecessary to notice

any other part of his speech, entreated him to tell her what circumstance he alluded to as connected with her father and Mr. Moncrief.

“Certainly,” he replied; “I only wish I had shewn you the letter much sooner.”

He then walked to his *escritoir*, from which he returned with a packet of letters, addressed to himself, in the well-remembered writing of Admiral Douglas; from them he selected one, which he put into the trembling hand of his daughter.

“It will be better,” he said, “that you should read it yourself.”

The first part related only to business; the second spoke of his children with the affectionate ardour of a fond parent. —“I am again about to leave England,” he said; “it may be that you will be called upon sooner than you expect to fulfil the trust I have reposed in you. Of their welfare I know you will be careful; watch over their tender years, and when  
they

they have reached those of maturity, if, among the young men who may have sought my Helen's hand, you know one whose heart, not merely his fortune, shall merit such a prize, give her to him. Such a being, I am well acquainted with; he is now her own age, and will, I am persuaded, grow up deserving of her; but there are obstacles, insurmountable obstacles, to such a union; if, therefore, at some future period, Charles Moncrief should woo my Helen, *remember* it must not be."

Awhile sir Arthur watched his unconscious victim, in expectation of the convulsive sob, the hysteric tear, so often the resource of female weakness—but Helen Douglas surpassed her sex in general.

For a moment she ruminated; then closing the letter with a degree of fortitude that awed her guardian, said—  
"Had I earlier known my father's sentiments, sir Arthur, some unhappiness might

might have been spared both Mr. Moncrief and myself. I have still to regret that his reasons were not more explanatory; but the duty which prompts me religiously to obey every command of his will be seconded by that affection, on the part of Charles, which, even as a child, made my father's will a law he would never have violated. While he acknowledges his worth, and regrets that though there are obstacles to our union, he does not forbid the sweet intercourse of friendship, which will still unite us in indissoluble bonds."

"But you do not mean to say, Miss Douglas, that it is your intention to devote yourself to a life of celibacy, because one man *only* in the universe is restrained from becoming your husband?"

"But if there is no other man in the universe whom I would accept as my husband, sir Arthur," she replied, "I may surely be allowed to choose my own destiny."

"Oh!



“ Oh! but Dorville must prevent such absurd ideas—he must not sit down tamely with one denial, and it is my duty to strengthen his cause with all my interest.”

“ Then, sir, you will only injure a cause, which were perhaps better left in his own hands.”

“ Well, well,” said sir Arthur, “ we shall see that; but having removed a very great weight from my own mind, I shall trust all to your prudence, satisfied you will act worthy the daughter of the great Douglas.”

Helen retired within her own room—ruminated on the singular mandate she had just perused. For the first time it occurred she had never heard who Moncrief’s parents were. Archibald and herself had been early taught to love him as a worthy little orphan, whom her father delighted to notice, and which the grateful boy returned with devoted affection. Could there be any kindred tie

tie that ought to separate them? In that case, would he not have been known in her family as a relation? Whatever the motives of concealment had been, they had proved fatal to her peace, and could not fail to destroy his, for the injunction was too sacred to be disregarded. On her knees she implored strength of mind to support the trial of resigning him as a husband, to whose future protection she had looked with so much certainty, and as solemnly vowed to adhere to her father's command.

Archibald was absent on an excursion of pleasure, and the interval of his return appeared a tedious space, so anxious was she become to communicate the mysterious letter to him. But pleasure had not dispersed the gloom which still shaded his countenance, and told his mind was ill at ease, when, having affectionately kissed her, he asked how she had spent the period of his short absence?

“Partly,”



“Partly,” she said, “in anticipating your return, for I had that to acquaint you with, which I ardently wish we had both known long since; but your too-visible unhappiness has rendered me indifferent to that which more particularly concerns myself, and I entreat you to say why I still see you thus altered?”

“I am not happy, Helen,” he returned, “for those who have trusted and been deceived cannot be happy; but I must first hear what you have to communicate, after which, we will talk of other matters.”

Having related the substance of sir Arthur’s conversation, and the subsequent letter, she asked if his imagination could form a clue to the mysterious meaning?

“None, Helen,” he said; “and yet I am rejoiced that such a letter is in being, since it will enable you to bear with more fortitude a far greater mystery, which I am fated, however reluctantly,

tantly, to relate. That my father had ostensible reasons for his prohibition we cannot doubt ; for when did he an unjust action, or one unworthy of himself ? Whatever they were, be they sacred. He died believing Moncrief a worthy character : I have lived long enough to unmask him."

"What can you mean ?" said the agitated Helen ; "*beware*, Archibald, how you blast the hitherto-spotless fame of Charles Moncrief."

"No man," he returned, "valued it higher than I did, until I found him basely false ; and there are points which he must clear before he can regain the friendship of which I now believe him so unworthy. — I have long known," he continued, "that his income was every way inadequate to support the expences of an extravagant mistress ; but a new scene is opened, which even your regard for him cannot palliate. Read that letter from an injured wife, and become  
yourself

yourself his judge; I will leave it with you, having named the means by which it came into my possession."

Helen remained silent, and he proceeded.

"The day previous to the departure of Moncrief, I called at his lodging, by appointment, and not finding him within, seated myself near the window to wait his arrival. In a few minutes after, the people of the house threw open the door for a female, who, with doubtful looks and a trembling step, entered the room. Distressed at seeing a stranger, instead of Moncrief, whom she evidently expected, she made many apologies for her intrusion, and retired, greatly embarrassed. Charles shortly after returned, and appeared even more confused than herself at the cross purpose they had been playing, when I attempted to rally him upon his want of gallantry in suffering the lady to be so much disappointed; and having, in a hurried manner,

ner, said the subject was too serious for ill-timed gaiety, he changed the subject. Some days after he had left England, the letter, with its inclosure, was delivered to me by my own man, who received it from a porter hired to deliver it. Perhaps I ought not to have violated its seal, but the happiness of a beloved sister was too nearly connected with it, to leave me time for cool reflection. I suspected Moncrief of dark design, and determined to become my own accuser by proofs of his innocence, or through the same agent to unmask a villain; I have done the latter, and as such he must answer to me for much of his past conduct."

Helen, aghast, took the fatal letter; but Archibald had left the room some time ere she had acquired sufficient resolution to peruse the dreaded contents. The envelope, addressed to Mr. Douglas, contained only a few lines, entreating him, as the friend of Mr. Moncrief,  
to

to convey the inclosed to him—"For it is now many days," said the writer, "since I have seen him, notwithstanding his solemn promise not to leave England without my doing so. I have been again to his lodgings, but they are given up, and to his address I have no clue but through the medium of your goodness; in pity, then, find some means of forwarding it, if you would save a distressed wife. A. MONCRIEF,"

## CHAPTER II.

~~~~~

THE letter addressed to Mr. Moncrief was a yet stronger appeal to the feelings.

"Charles," it began, "you have again  
deceived

deceived me. In vain I have, from day to day, expected you, in vain prepared my humble abode to receive its beloved lord : you came not, and my lisping William as vainly asks why papa is so long away ? Is it that you cannot bear to see your infant likeness without publicly acknowledging his claims upon you ; or that shrinking, from the want of resolution to do us justice, you can no longer find excuses for this cruel desertion ? Why, if you have not fortitude to own your marriage, forbid my doing so ? The duty I owe myself as a wife—a mother, would nerve me with resolution to plead my cause ; for is it not a just one ? Tell me not she would reject my entreaties, for I have seen her angelic countenance, and the mild expression of her eyes bespeaks her the wretch's friend. I will tell her, that loving you to distraction, I lured you from the duty which her father had bound you to—urged you to  
break

break the fatal contract made before reason had empowered you to act for yourself—tell her, that still revering the memory of that father, you have, fatally for me, vowed never to acknowledge our ill-starred union, until her own marriage with some more wealthy husband leaves you at liberty to do so. Tell me no more that Mr. Dorville is to be the friend so essential to my peace, for if they are really engaged, why hesitate to avow my rights? Charles, I am become resolute—despair has made me so. In a very few days, if I see you not, I will present my hapless Willam, in person, to Miss Douglas, and implore her, by all the sacred claims of humanity, to give my child a father—a husband to the deserted

ANNA.”

When Helen first perused the letter, all was chaos in her hitherto-placid mind: a reperusal gave her more fortitude, and before she again met Archibald, she had effectually calmed every tumultuous throb,



throb, and arranged everything to her own satisfaction.

To see Charles again was, she found, impossible; but it was still in her power to restore his lost honour by giving him freedom.

Many parts of the letter were ambiguous, as far as related to promises made by her father, but those she passed over; it was sufficient that she understood in what way she could give happiness to others, though at the sacrifice of her own—" 'Tis done," she mentally exclaimed; "without an interview I could never sustain, my own union shall give you back a truant husband—I will, unsolicited, cancel every obligation that can bind him to Helen Douglas."

Thus prepared to see her brother, she returned him the letter, and entreated he would never renew the subject, lest she should be induced to censure the zeal which had rendered him guilty of a crime, in betraying the confidence re-  
posed



posed in him, and then coolly inquired when he had seen Dorville?

“Not two hours since,” he replied, “at which time his physicians had pronounced him in a dangerous state, and advised change of air, as soon as he could be moved with safety.”

Helen had never heard of his indisposition, and supposed that pique only had made him absent himself so many days from sir Arthur’s.

Archibald did not fail to magnify his danger, which was merely the result of a violent cold, caught by imprudently exposing himself too much on a water party; and a very few days brought him, in person, to acknowledge the kind inquiries Helen had continually made after his health when she believed him really indisposed.

Encouraged by her continued attention, he eagerly renewed his addresses, which, sanctioned by sir Arthur, accepted by herself, and hastened by her indefatigable

able brother, soon saw her the passive bride of the enraptured Dorville.

Days and weeks of public rejoicing, balls and fetes surpassing each other in splendour, gave no other pleasure to the pensive Helen, than as they would, by making her marriage thus public, leave her reason to suppose it could not fail to reach even the obscure abode of the sorrowing wife of Moncrief, who she now ventured to believe was the lady she had seen at the jeweller's door; but soon weary of the life she was then leading, she entreated, and at length prevailed on Dorville to take her into the country for a short time—even proposed his return to Ireland, where his property chiefly lay, and the family constantly resided, to whose honours and title he was to succeed.

Ever anxious to oblige her, he promised to accompany her immediately, and preparations, which ill suited sir Arthur, were instantly set about for their departure,

departure, who had every day more reason to dread the settlement Dorville was now authorized to demand, before they left town for the country, where they proposed remaining a few months.

Previous to their visiting Ireland (for having once infringed upon the property committed to his care, *conscience* was lulled in security) he had speculated, and lost—played, and was ruined; but the retributive day was at length appointed, hastened by the eager desire of Helen to leave London before Moncrief returned to England, an explanation with whom was impossible, since it must expose her brother's life to his naturally impetuous temper.

On the morning preceding that on which she was to commence her journey, Dorville's servant entered the drawing-room, and looking wildly round, to see if she was alone, begged her, if she would ever see his master again, to follow him.

Although with a heart still fondly devoted to another, she had married Dorville, no one could have more sacredly fulfilled the duties of a wife than Helen. Without asking a question, she threw on a shawl, stepped into the carriage which James had provided for her, and then, for the first time, entreated him to tell her what had happened to his master, and where she was to find him?

“An affair of honour, madam,” he said, “but I do not know the gentleman with whom he fought; he, however, is dead, and indeed I fear my master cannot long survive him.”

A few minutes brought them to the house whither Dorville had been conveyed, and where, supported by strangers, he waited for the deeply-injured Helen, to whom, in breathless agony, after dismissing every person but herself and his faithful servant, he related a tale of horror, against which even *her* fortitude

was

was not proof. Few were the moments allotted him to breathe out a guilty soul—to acknowledge that he had already, in Ireland, a wife and two children—that his still-adored Helen had been duped by the united artifice of her brother and guardian, to the former of whom he was a considerable creditor, but the debt was cancelled by the marriage with her; while sir Arthur, equally indebted to Archibald, had willingly entered into all their plans, among which was the forged letter, said to have been written by her father, and the second, no less false, given her by her brother—“That wretched young man,” he added, “must fly on my account—but, oh Helen! the fatal sequel is yet untold! Moncrief has been permitted to revenge his own and your wrongs. I die by his hands, but he lives not to exult over the guilty expiring Dorville.”

Helen heard no more, nor did the powers of recollection return until many

days after he had been consigned to his untimely grave. Then she learned that lady Moreland had left the house on the same day the duel had taken place, and that it was generally supposed she had become the companion of her brother's flight—that sir Arthur had been declared a bankrupt, and was then in concealment—but of the lamented Moncrief no information could be procured.

The mind that could bear such intelligence and live—take a retrospect of past events, and still retain its reason, must have been of no common order; but Helen did more: she never, for an instant, reviled the memory of Dorville—forgave, with Christian charity, the base destroyer of all her earthly comforts, and from her heart commiserated the miserable sir Arthur; while in the deepest recesses of that lacerated heart she concealed from every eye the silent sorrow with which she mourned the death of her still loved, still regretted lover,



lover, for duty no longer sternly forbade her doing so.

As the widow of Dorville, even though he never had possessed her affections, she would have struggled against the sentiments of undiminished affection for Charles Moncrief, and which his death had so forcibly revived; but the man who had so cruelly deceived her had no longer a claim upon her actions, and to the memory of him who was now alike unconscious of the vow she made, she determined henceforth to devote the remaining years of her life.

Happily she was spared a trial, which, in her present situation, she would have considered greater even than some of those she had been destined to endure. There existed no living proof of her fatal marriage with Dorville, and she determined instantly to remove from a scene in which she had known but little happiness, and where the extreme of misery had overtaken her at a very early age.

Of her father's family there remained but few branches; those were remote, and resided in a distant part of England. Her mother had been an only child, who survived both her parents, and had left no near connexions to whom Helen could look for protection.

Thus circumstanced, she determined to travel, until her mind had recovered that degree of tranquillity which was requisite to her forming future plans. Only one circumstance prevented her instantly leaving London, which she was daily more desirous of doing—this was the deranged state of sir Arthur's affairs.

She was obliged to have frequent conferences with her solicitors; and at last, in addition to all she had suffered, heard the fatal confirmation, that of her once-handsome fortune, only a genteel sufficiency would remain from the wreck of sir Arthur's property—that her brother's was equally involved, though it was supposed



posed lady Moreland had made some provision for the excursion which sir Arthur affirmed he believed would have taken place, had not the death of Mr. Dorville obliged Archibald to abscond, as he had long suspected an improper intimacy, and but that he knew how deeply he had injured Douglas in many affairs, should have compelled him to leave his house.

Sincerely commiserating the imprudent old man, Helen entreated an interview with him, previous to her leaving town ; but unable to sustain the sight of a being in whose destruction he had borne so active a part, he refused to see her, but anxiously implored her to forgive the wretch whom sorrow and remorse were hastening to the grave, in which only he sought to hide the grey hairs, *disgraced* by his *own* conduct, and dishonoured by her who had been his ruin.

Having consigned into the hands of a near relation all that she possessed of

Dorville's property, and engaged the widow of a worthy but indigent clergyman, who had been powerfully recommended to her as a companion, she now left England, under the assumed name of Mrs. Duncannon: to that of Dorville she had no pretensions; she wished no clue to remain by which her unworthy and dissipated brother might trace her on his return to England; and feeling that he had disgraced the once-spotless lustre of that her gallant father had given him, she determined never to resume it herself: all others were immaterial, and that of Duncannon, as first occurring, was made choice of.

Her knowledge of the French language had often made her desirous of visiting France in her happier days: she was now at liberty to do so, though under very different circumstances, which greatly diminished the pleasure she had once anticipated from so doing. Still she  
was

was gratified ; her mind, gradually recovering from its depression, became more and more interested in all she saw, and daily acquired that strength which was natural to it.

Had her fortune remained what it was, she would have had no idea of limiting her travels, since a wandering life was become most congenial to her present feelings ; but as only a genteel income remained of former affluence, she found economy must of necessity be considered in her arrangements, as the property she possessed was insufficient to gratify the desire of seeing other countries, if she meant to retain the gratification she had ever derived from being prepared to extend the hand of benevolence to penury and distress.

Since a permanent residence, therefore, was to be selected, she determined on remaining, at least for a time, in the neighbourhood where she had been some months a resident, when the disturbances

broke out between France and England. It was at last exposed to all the horrors of a regular siege, which was sustained for many weeks with unwearied perseverance by the inhabitants.

An assault being at last meditated, which, it was expected, would take place at midnight, the women and children were in consequence conveyed, under a strong guard, in the evening, to a field in the environs of the town, and where they were to wait the result.

Mrs. Duncannon, whose little establishment consisted only of herself, Mrs. Smith, her companion, one female servant, and the worthy Gilbert, were easily removed, and having but little to lose, felt more commiseration for the melancholy companions of their flight than themselves.

Their dark and solitary march was rendered more distressing by an awful storm, which, as it continued to gather over their defenceless heads, appeared  
portentous

portentous of the fate which awaited their devoted city, while the thunder appeared to echo back, in mournful vibration, the heavy sighs of wives and mothers for those whom they had left still more exposed to a relentless enemy.

Scarcely had they reached the spot appointed for their safety, when a soldier, who was carrying a child that wept bitterly, addressed Mrs. Duncannon in the French language, entreating her, if she had any humanity, to try and pacify the boy—"I have saved him," he said, "from being trampled to death with the woman in whose arms he was, and who was knocked down by one of the horses. But what I am to do with the child I know not," continued the man; "it may be that at daylight, some person may own him, or when this dreadful confusion is over, if you will take care of him till then, for I must return to my duty."

"Fear not, my good friend," she replied, taking the little fellow from his  
kind

kind deliverer; "I will protect him, and, if possible, find out to whom he belongs."

The man, pleased at having extricated himself from a burthen with which his humanity had taxed him, went speedily forward, and Mrs. Duncannon, wrapping her large cloak round the trembling child, who, drenched with rain, laid his little head upon her affectionate bosom, and still sobbed mamma, seated herself upon the damp ground.

For some time she had tried in vain to sooth his infant sorrow, but sleep at length prevailed over terror; and tenderly guarded from the midnight air, unconscious of the wretched scene by which he was surrounded, and too young to be sensible of danger, he awoke not until morning having dawned upon their comfortless situation, presented the wretched groupe to each other's view.

On every countenance was depicted anxiety, misery, and despair, in which Mrs. Duncannon most sincerely sympathized;



thized ; but she was a stranger, unknown, and she felt had few claims upon their attention as an Englishwoman. Every one was, however, too much absorbed in their own distress to be mindful of others ; and in vain she sought, among those nearest to her, for some one to whom her charge might be known.

Of himself or family he was too young to give any account, but there remained no doubt of their being English, as his accent, in pronouncing *mamma*, was perfectly correct ; and when, in that language, she asked his name, he answered *Henry* ; but when she spoke in French, he remained silent.

The assault not having taken place as was expected, the melancholy party were reconducted to the city at an early hour in the morning ; but the besiegers having only deferred the threatened evil, not abandoned it, continued obstinately to support the siege.

A continuation of tumult and confusion  
was

was the result of their protracted danger, which precluded all possibility of attending to private calamities. Thus the parents of little Henry continued ignorant of his existence, and Mrs. Duncannon remained his only protector, when, having nearly exhausted their artillery and ammunition, the governor thought proper to surrender the garrison, upon honourable terms, which were accepted by the enemy, and the garrison retired to Tournay.

Weary of scenes which ill accorded with the humane sentiments of Mrs. Duncannon, she determined to remain no longer in Lisle than was absolutely requisite that she should do, after it had been taken possession of by the English.

The probability of tracing Henry's family became every day more remote; and, delighted with the addition to her little family, though deeply regretting the sorrow of his parents, if either or both survived, she prepared for her departure;



ture; and having, by easy stages, reached Ostend, once more embarked for the shores of England, still irresolute where, on her arrival, she should fix her future abode.

Mrs. Smith, who was a native of Scotland, had often dwelt, with strong enthusiasm, on the picturesque scenes of her native country—for such scenes her friend had a natural taste; it was now heightened by the pleasure of having so interesting a companion to share the retirement in which she wished to live.

Every day endeared the sweet boy more to her; and accompanied by Mrs. Smith, she hastened to the north, intending to make the tour of Scotland, or, at least, by travelling through it, to select a spot for her permanent residence.

At a small village, within a few miles of Dunwarden Castle, her respected companion, whose attention to herself and pleasing manners had made her long since a valued friend, was seized with

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an alarming fever; the crisis was fatal, and again the affectionate heart of Mrs. Duncannon was taxed with unfeigned sorrow.

She saw her remains deposited in the peaceful grave, and proceeded onward, mournful and dejected; but a violent cold, caught in her attendance upon Mrs. Smith, having rendered her unequal to the fatigue of travelling, she remained a few days in the environs of the castle, and it was during her residence in this retired spot she discovered the beautycottage which had attracted her admiration on the bourn side was uninhabited.

Pleased to have found a place so consonant to her wishes, she lost no time in gaining possession of it; and here the infant days of Seymour had passed, uninterrupted by even an infant sorrow. As retaining his own name would have continually awakened the painful recollection of Dorville's memory, whom she had always

ways been accustomed to call Henry, Mrs. Duncannon felt no hesitation in changing it for that of Seymour, when she found all her inquiries relative to his family were unavailing. Too young to retain any lasting impression of those to whom he belonged, and won by the tender caresses of his adopted mother, the little stranger soon transferred to her the endearing terms by which he was wont to address his natural parent; and it was some years after their residence at the bourn side that she unfolded, by degrees, many of the events which had made him a member of her family; but gratitude had then marked out the strong tie of duty which bound him to her, and, satisfied with his happy lot, he neither wished for nor anticipated any change.

In this pleasing seclusion, Mrs. Duncannon found full scope for her active benevolence: many were the pensioners on her bounty, all of whom had learnt to appreciate her value from experience,  
and

and were prepared to render a just tribute to her worth.

When Donald came to reside among them, it was not long before she found out his humble dwelling also, and a short period sufficed to attach her with a kindly interest to their welfare.

Few occurrences had marked the years spent in her peaceful abode, where she had learnt resignation, practised the sacred duties of humanity, and, almost in the bloom of life, prepared herself for a removal to that world of spirits where only she might hope to meet the kindred soul of Moncrief, when Seymour, his eyes flashing with the intelligence he believed must be so highly gratifying to his more than mother, eagerly proclaimed the arrival of her brother.

This unexpected information, together with the painful events it revived in her memory, which had so long lain dormant, nearly overpowered her. Gladly would she have evaded the interview, had that been possible; for having long  
since

since taught herself to consider him as dead to her, she had no wish to again encounter the being whom nature had indeed given claims upon her, but whom every sentiment of violated affection bade her disown.

The dreaded interview was short but decisive, and at that time she intended it should be the last.

“It was not thus, Helen, we were wont to meet,” said Archibald, assuming a serious aspect, when Seymour had left the room.

Trusting to the well-remembered gentleness of her disposition, he had imagined time and their long separation would have so far veiled the enormities of his past conduct in friendly oblivion, that he had only to sue for pardon and obtain it, display his increased wealth, and prevail on her to quit her present solitude, particularly when he went prepared to acknowledge her child as his avowed heir.

In India, where he had flown for safety

safety on the death of Dorville and the deeply-injured Moncrief, fortune, who often favours the most unworthy, had smiled propitious on the guilty exile, and quickly gave him more than either his own imprudence, or that of sir Arthur, had taken from him.

Pleased with the rapid accumulation of eastern riches, he soon lost all remembrance of the dissolute lady Moreland, who, though actually the partner of his flight, was not permitted to leave the shores of England.

Having arranged everything for an elopement, which she had long meditated, and of which Archibald was to become a willing companion, provided she would supply the means, she was to leave her husband's house at an early hour in the day, and wait at an appointed rendezvous for the arrival of Douglas, who had set out for that purpose, when Dorville's servant meeting him, put into his hands a note from his master;

it



it demanded an instant interview at the place named; and Archibald, without hesitation, followed James to a neighbouring coffeehouse, where, in all the horrors of distraction, he found Dorville in a private room, waiting his arrival.—“In an honourable cause, Douglas,” he exclaimed, on his closing the door, “you would have found me firm and intrepid; but courage nerves not the villain’s arm, and fortitude cannot support the guilty mind; that I am so, too well *you* know—but it was not to upbraid you with what is now past that I sought you, but to claim your assistance. Are you prepared to become my second in an affair of honour? I have an appointment, which even now I have exceeded, for I was but allowed time to choose my second; and, shall I tell you, was entreated in mercy to let it be any being who wore the form of man but you? Now, need I say who is my adversary? Does not your own heart whisper, ’tis the injured Moncrief?

Moncrief? As yet he knows not *how* deeply injured; but he has sworn to revenge the fatal marriage, which he believes you promoted, and avers he dare not see you until I have given him satisfaction, lest, forgetting you are the brother of Helen, he should imbrue his hands in your blood also; but for this I take you—it will unman him, and Dorville may yet live to triumph.”

### CHAPTER III.

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CONFOUNDED by intelligence for which he was wholly unprepared, he entreated Dorville to tell him where he had met with Moncrief, of whose arrival in England they had not even heard.

“We have no time for explanation,”  
said



said his friend, "as Moncrief is doubtless adding cowardice to the many acts of baseness with which I stand accused."

Charles, as he had expected, was already waiting his arrival; but shuddering at the duplicity with which Dorville had acted, in bringing Douglas before his aching sight, he coolly turned away when the latter addressed him, and regardless of what he said, inquired if Dorville was ready to take his ground? He was answered in the affirmative, but that Mr. Douglas wished to have a previous conference with him.

"Never!" said the indignant Moncrief; "if Mr. Douglas can calmly behold the victim of his treachery, I have no tongue to confer with a false friend. My business, sir, is with you, and the sooner we adjust it the better."

The distance was then measured, each took his station, and the fatal fire was exchanged at the same moment. Dorville instantly fell, but Moncrief, sup-

ported in the arms of his friend, for a moment struggled hard for sufficient strength to send his last blessing to his fondly-regretted Helen.

Archibald's heart, struck by the too certain conviction that he had been unquestionably the death of two friends whom he had once loved, would have implored Moncrief's dying pardon, but the powers of utterance were denied him—death had stamped its strong outlines on his once fine features; and having assisted in the melancholy office of conveying him to the carriage in waiting, he returned to the expiring Dorville, who, convinced of his own fate, entreated him, as he valued his sister's peace, to preserve his own safety by flight, while his servant and the medical man who attended conveyed him to the coffeehouse at which Helen had found him.

No remorse had seized her brother in the morning, when he was on the road to join the guilty partner of his journey:

now

now it raised its scorpion fangs, gave added speed to his flight, and awakened a thousand terrors for his own safety.

Lady Moreland anxiously counted the lingering hours until they met; but the playful smile, the fascinating sweetness assumed for his reception, faded before the internal struggles with which he had to contend; already he felt the difference between a voluntary exile and the banished man: he was now the latter, and would gladly have left sir Arthur in quiet possession of his frail wife, had not the property she had taken with her been essential to his safety; for without her assistance it was impossible to proceed, so little was he prepared for the events which had taken place.

Having reached the sea-coast, they took up their abode in an obscure lodging, as no vessel was ready to carry them to Dunkirk, whither they had proposed landing, owing to the adverse winds which prevailed, and which precluded

even the chance of safety, should they hazard the attempt. Here a sore throat, which had for several days been making rapid progress, but which her ladyship had endeavoured to baffle, reached its dreadful climax: within a few hours, human aid was vain; and a wild delirium was the result, which finally terminated in the death of a being who had left in society no heart interested in her fate, no commiserating spirit to lament her fall, nor eye of pity to shed the kindly tear.

Grasping the money and jewels which could alone cover his retreat, and eager to evade pursuit, Archibald hurried from the spot which marked his companion's fate, and in a short time reached Ostend: the signal for sailing floated in the breeze at the mast-head of an Indiaman about to leave the port, on board of which it was no difficult task to procure a passage; and once an inhabitant of Indostan, captivated by its luxurious customs, the magnificence

nificence which it was possible to attain, and lolling in supine ease in his splendid palanquin, he lost all remembrance of past transactions, former scenes, and with that the wish of returning to them, or indeed his native country; until a severe attack of the liver complaint, which had nearly deprived him of life, induced his physicians to advise the air of England as the most efficacious remedy they could prescribe.

Never had Mr. Douglas been *less* prepared to die, for never had he so highly valued the things of this life; avarice was become a darling passion, from which he found it impossible to part; he therefore eagerly pursued his doctor's advice; and once more landed on the shores of England, where, from the inquiries he was at liberty to make without revealing his own situation, he learned that sir Arthur had closed his miserable existence in a prison; but it was some time before one of those chances

incident in human life revealed to him the real situation of his sister, whom having at last discovered, he determined to remove from a dreary solitude, to which he believed only necessity and her straitened circumstances could have driven her.

Willing to ascertain how she would receive him after such an absence, he left his servants within a few miles of her supposed dwelling, and was proceeding thither alone, and on foot, when Donald was engaged to conduct him to it.

The interview with Seymour was a new subject of pleasure: he had ample wealth for this child of Dorville's, for such he naturally supposed him, whom he would make his heir, well knowing the death of his father would, by revealing his former marriage, a knowledge of which had reached him in India, leave this his offspring neither name nor property: he was enabled to give him both,  
and



and by so doing, in part repair the injury done to his amiable mother : the former she rejected, with that greatness of soul that bespoke her a daughter of Douglas, at the same time explaining, as much as she thought necessary, the situation of Seymour. To his entreaties that she would return with him to that world from whence she had so long secluded herself, she coolly answered, the one of which she had made choice was become too essential to her frame of mind to leave her a wish of quitting it. —“I would ask you, Archibald,” she continued, “in what way the world, to which you would restore me, contributed to my comfort during the short period I passed in it? but my wounded mind dare not even yet revert to the fatal events which marred my promised happiness—I must not even trust myself to think of the subject, lest I should be led to ask still more how you could

acquire resolution to meet the being whom you have so cruelly persecuted?"

"I had hoped," he replied, "that time would have erased this too keen remembrance of a brother's errors—that, at least as a Christian, you would have forgiven them, and returned with me to share that affluence I am blest with."

"The once keen remembrance of past transactions has," she replied, "subsided into that calm which leaves the mind ample leisure for the active duties of life; in this secluded spot I have many to fulfil, and by occupying every moment, memory is beguiled of its too powerful privilege. If my forgiveness were indeed requisite to your peace, I have long since, Archibald, not only pardoned you, but all who contributed to my ruin: I have too long practised economy to have any farther need of affluence—religion, not wealth, must sooth the lacerated heart; in its divine  
consolations



consolations I have hitherto found that comfort of which the world unjustly deprived me. Leave me then the undisturbed possession of my tranquillity, if you respect my peace, but name not atonement, as you would spare the agonizing reflection that the murdered Moncrief moulders in an unknown grave."

Awed by the solemnity of her manner, as she raised her swimming eyes to heaven, he would have spoken, but his faltering lips had lost their faculty, and refused utterance to the entreaties he would have urged. At length assuming more resolution—"You will then suffer me, Helen, to return alone to the enjoyment of a fortune which you refuse to share with me, and from which I no longer promise myself comfort? Suffer me at least to provide for your *protégée*, who will need an education suited to the possession of that property I can give him; and for his sake,

if not for the despised Archibald, at least, you may be prevailed on to quit this obscure retreat."

"I have not yet," she returned, "decided upon the plan I may hereafter adopt for Seymour, nor does his present age require a hasty decision. In point of fortune, my own will be adequate to the moderate wishes of a boy, educated as he has been in retirement. In the gay world you will form new connexions, those, I trust, better calculated to promote your happiness than former ones; for the affluent never want friends; we have no need of it; and the only favour you can now do me is to leave me the quiet possession of that solitude in which you have found me."

"Ungenerous Helen!" said the angry Douglas; "then you calmly resign all future intercourse with a repentant brother, who finds you more than ever requisite to his lost peace? I will leave you, since my presence is become thus  
hateful;

hateful; but the period may yet arrive when even your religion shall accuse you of having cruelly thrown off that brother whose contrition was disregarded. When you next hear of me," he added, "it may be that some more kindly hand has closed those eyes whose last repenting tears were shed for you—that strangers have shared the wealth which might have added comforts to your future years."

"Rather, I would trust," she said, "that the awful scene of which you speak so lightly may be witnessed by dutiful children, whose filial affection, while it soothed, might indeed convince you of the importance of such an hour. The duty I owe to a betrothed husband, to my abused and injured Charles, demand that I should avoid his living murderer; but it would not restrain me at such a moment. On the contrary, upon the bed of sickness I would fly to nurse you, to impart, if happily I might

do so, comfort in the closing scene of existence; but pardon me, Archibald, if I again repeat, in health and affluence we must be strangers to each other."

" 'Tis well," he returned, rising with indignation; "if this is the boasted philanthropy of the avowed Christian, give me the sentiments I have maintained through life, and still will cherish, since, unrestrained by the awful dread of Omnipotence, that teaches charity, even I have a heart to forgive an injury—a mind too disinterested to remember it when past: as a proof, let this token of reconciliation," extending his hand to take hers, "prove that we part friends."

"Notwithstanding the cruel assertion that has passed your lips, be assured," she replied, "you take with you my sincerest wishes for your temporal happiness; and should we never meet again, believe that my last prayer shall be for your eternal welfare."

Donald was then summoned, and the  
disappointed

disappointed Douglas left the bourn side, bitterly inveighing against that obduracy which had to the last resisted his importunities, half repenting the unnecessary trouble he had taken in so long a journey, and secretly determining no part of his immense property should ever descend either to Helen or the boy, whom he meanly considered a rival to himself in her affections. But this determination, made in the hour of health, in the fever of passion, faded on the bed of sickness: the soul-harrowing reflection, that he was indirectly a murderer, the base seducer of an innocent creature, whom he had left destitute, the guilty paramour of another man's wife, and the fell destroyer of his sister's peace, rising in dreadful array before his sickened senses, required more fortitude than usually falls to the atheist's lot: the passive Anna and her infant boy, who had more than once been indebted to the friendly aid  
of

of the generous Moncrief, and whose warm interest in her unfortunate fate had converted Archibald's friendship into mean jealousy, which eventually led to the duel, now presented claims too powerful to be rejected: anxiously he wished to trace her residence, for to her at least he might render justice. Not less joyfully would he have realized the vain hope that Moncrief had survived, even though he believed the hand of death was upon him when last he saw his injured friend; but far more ardently he endeavoured to grasp the dreadful veil which with horror he felt was partly receding from his hitherto-deluded mind: a world of which he had never thought now dawned, not upon his untaught, but wilfully blinded, imagination—a Being with whose name he had so often sported, whose existence he had dared to deny, in the solemn hour of midnight half revealed his fearful majesty. At such an hour, stretch-

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ed on the bed of pain, weakened by bodily disease, and despairing of relief, the *atheist trembled!* Ashamed to confess his error, yet every day more convinced he had been self-deceived, the proud spirit, humbled to unmanly weakness, eagerly sought its last and only resource. Helen's promise was remembered with ecstasy ; her gentle soothing spirit might yet whisper hope; to her he could reveal the fatal principles he had so long cherished; she would sooth the lingering hours of pain, teach him to sustain the pangs of death, and at least pray for the recreant soul about to leave its frail tenement. With a trembling hand, he claimed her promise, painted the horrors of his mind, and entreated her, as she would save a being from perdition, to lose no time in hastening to him.

Such a summons could not fail of success : Mrs. Duncannon had few arrangements to make that could deter her perseverance

severance when it was so necessary to the peace of a fellow-creature, much less the claims of a brother; but as her return to the north would depend upon Archibald's health, she was become anxious for the fate of Jessy, to whom her attachment daily strengthened: when, therefore, lady Madeline entreated the charge of her, she sent for Donald, imparted the pleasure she had herself derived from the offer, and advised him, on no account to remove her from lady Madeline's protection till her return, which she promised should be as early as possible.

“ I have no will but yours, madam,” said the grateful Donald; “ but I shall be very unhappy until I see that blessed day, for if your ladyship should never come back, my poor Jessy will lose the only friend who can stand up for her; should any thing turn out—you understand me, madam; and though I ought not to advise you, I was thinking, madam,



dam, as life is uncertain, if it might not be better to tell lady Madeline something of the affair."

"I think not, my good friend," said Mrs. Duncannon, "and am of opinion, that we must yet trust to time; lady Madeline's zeal in the cause may only injure it, and I must know lord Malcolm still better, before I hazard a cause so feebly supported as is ours. Nevertheless I have, for your satisfaction, prepared a letter, which I shall leave in your possession, and which must be used as occasion may require: for instance, in the event of lord Malcolm's death, his removal from the castle, or illness on your own part which may be considered dangerous, fail not to deliver it to lady Madeline Sinclair, together with the seal which I shall restore to your keeping. I had trusted some event might have transpired ere this, which would have given me an opportunity of naming my own surmises, and have even ventured to ask her ladyship

ship many questions relative to her brother; but she is as much a stranger to his residence, or indeed existence, as myself."

"But I, madam, you know, have only to upbraid myself, and God knows I have suffered enough for it: if I had only preserved the letter, we should have known all; and how shall I ever acknowledge to Jessy the fatal loss which, through my carelessness, has left her no chance now of ever being restored to her excellent father? How will she despise me for having brought her up as my own child—a poor creature like me, when such a fine handsome gentleman was her real father!"

"Jessy will always gratefully acknowledge your goodness to her, Donald," returned Mrs. Duncannon, "and I will take care to convince her every thing has been done for the best; but you and I may both live to see her reinstated in her own family, if our suppositions should

should be realized, and I have never yet doubted it. Should it, however, prove otherwise, I will endeavour to supply the place of that mother she never knew; for it is my firm intention, on my return, should things remain as in their present state, to provide for her."

"Heaven bless your goodness," replied Donald, "and grant it may be rewarded!"

"I am richly rewarded, my good friend," she said, "by having it in my power to contribute in any way to the comfort of so worthy a creature as yourself."

Donald made his grateful bow, and retired with a full heart to lament even the temporary absence of such a friend, little foreseeing that months were destined to become years before she again blessed his anxious sight.

Mrs. Duncannon having left the promised packet, proceeded with Seymour to England, and reached her brother's residence

residence in safety, of whom scarce a vestige remained of what had once been Douglas. Shocked at the ravages sickness had made in his appearance, but more so at the doubtful horrors depicted in his altered features, she no longer remembered him as the destroyer of Moncrief, but as the brother whom she would have ardently rescued from the too certain grasp of death, and for whom she daily wearied Heaven with prayers, only for lengthened life to disavow his past sentiments, and embrace the faith which could alone secure him a joyful eternity.

Conscious of her pious intention, he blest the intercessor for mercy, felt that he was permitted to hope, and from the very precincts of the grave was restored to sufficient health for that removal which the faculty had pronounced indispensable—"Leave me not, Helen," he said, "lest my wavering faith, losing its only support, should again plunge  
me

me into the fearful abyss. To you alone I owe life, but it is even yet an expiring taper, which a hasty breath may extinguish. I have no wish for lengthened years, neither will they be allowed me, but in mercy send me not alone to a strange country."

She had no intention of doing so; and having written to lady Madeline, stating the cause of her detention, and again more strongly recommended Jessy to her protecting care, commissioned a friend of her brother, when the lease of her little cottage was expired, to give it up, she set out with her invalid to the south of France, from which excursion she hoped to derive the two-fold advantage of returning health to the declining Archibald, and the improvement of her beloved Seymour, who had now a prospect of enjoying wealth which it was no longer in her power to reject, as any opposition to the wishes of Douglas had become even dangerous to his existence; and

and he had already settled his worldly affairs so much to his satisfaction, that nothing could have urged him to retract the deed.

By unwearied perseverance, Mrs. Duncannon had discovered the obscure residence of the wretched Anna and her interesting William, whom she had hitherto supported upon the precarious produce of her needle. Douglas had readily acknowledged their wrongs, and his unjust desertion of them; to compensate which, he made ample provision for their future years previous to his leaving England.

Provided with an excellent tutor, Seymour's improvement kept pace with the fondest wishes of his inestimable friend, and Douglas, delighted by the attentions of the noble-minded boy, who was become essential to his comfort, and gratified by the affectionate goodness of his sister, began to anticipate renovated health; but the fiat was gone forth



forth—the mandate had only been procrastinated, not recalled; and in the gracious reprieve, he had not only been permitted to triumph over the impious delusion that taught him to disbelieve a God, but had lived long enough to attest the mercies of a Mediator—to acknowledge redeeming love, and died a trusting and believing Christian.

During her residence in France, many were the letters Mrs. Duncannon had forwarded to Scotland, but the silence lady Madeline maintained on her part left her at a loss to conjecture whether the omission resulted from her ladyship's inattention, or was to be attributed to the differences then existing between the two countries, which might render the communications uncertain. Rather wishing to believe the latter, and more than ever anxious to gain some intelligence of Jessy, she determined on remaining no longer abroad than was consistent with Seymour's advantage; and  
scarcely



scarcely allowing herself time to recover from the fatigue of a rough and dangerous passage across the Channel, she left London for the north, and proceeded, as already related, to the humble abode of her favourite Donald.

Here disappointments for which she was not prepared, and intelligence she had least expected, awaited her arrival; the former she had been too early in life accustomed to not to bear it with becoming fortitude; the latter, as promising valuable advantages to her beloved Seymour, she greeted with delight; and, prepossessed with a belief that lady Stewart would as instantly recognize the articles in her possession, if really belonging to her child, and that the mother of such a child would want little inducement to acknowledge him, if she could prove a claim, she entered Dunwarden Castle under the most favourable presentiments of success to her sanguine wishes, and which a short period verified.

Alike

Alike charmed by her reception, the affable manners of lord Stewart, and the interesting sweetness of her ladyship's address, she lost no time in leading to the purport of her visit, which she prefaced with many acknowledgments for the condescending goodness of lady Stewart to her old pensioner Margretta.

This naturally led to the singular loss of her husband. "Perhaps," said her ladyship, "it was a degree of sympathy which attached me to that poor creature; for I also," she added, "have lived to regret an object fondly beloved, whom I lost in a manner scarcely less singular."

The tear which glistened in her long dark eyelashes, as she spoke, met the sympathetic one which filled the no less expressive eyes of Mrs. Duncannon, as she said—"Am I rightly informed, that your ladyship was a resident of Lisle during the siege?"

In a faltering voice, she answered in the affirmative.

“Then you behold an interested inquirer, lady Stewart,” she returned, “for I also was a witness to the horrors of that night——”

“But you lost no dear relative, I trust?” said her ladyship, interrupting her.

“On the contrary,” Mrs. Duncannon replied, “I entered Lisle a sorrowing stranger, almost without a tie to life; but in the hand of Providence, I became the happy instrument of preserving a little treasure, who has since richly rewarded me, by contributing every thing to the happiness of my existence.”

She had now reached the crisis which was to determine the fate of Seymour, and impatiently surveyed the countenance of her auditors.

“Would,” said the agitated lady Stewart, “that my beloved Henry had been thus fortunate! Had he fallen into  
the

the hands of some kindly interested being, who would have rescued him for humanity's sake, we might have hoped——”

Unable to finish the sentence, lord Stewart continued—“ Unhappily, my dear madam, in the confusion which prevailed, we were separated from the child and his unfortunate nurse, who was the next day discovered among many others, who had been literally trampled to death : it was only by her clothes we could have recognized her ; but of the dear boy there remained not even that poor satisfaction, mournful as it would have been.”

“ It would have been a certain conviction of his death, my lord,” replied Mrs. Duncannon ; “ but while no such proofs were produced, I must own my sanguine mind would have anticipated, that in such a scene of confusion—in such a multitude, where every one's heart, softened by their own misfortunes, was

open to the distress of others—I should indeed have trusted that he had been rescued from the fate of his attendant.”

“ But our inquiries,” said lady Stewart, “ for him were unwearied, though fruitless; in vain we described his size, his dress, which even the clasps in his shoes would have identified, for they were of pure gold, and cyphered with his name.”

“ From this moment, then, lady Stewart,” returned the now-agitated Mrs. Duncannon, “ let me entreat you never to despair when there is a plea for hope. Mark the unerring hand of Providence, which permits a stranger to bring you information of this long-lost treasure, and let your fortitude be proportioned to the blessing reserved for you; for I am privileged to say, not only all the mother rising in your soul must acknowledge your child, but that any mother might exultingly own him such.”

“ And to you, madam,” said lord Stewart,

Stewart, rising in visible agitation, and respectfully taking her hand, "to you are we to owe the blessing you promise? Oh, revoke not the hopes you have raised, lest lady Stewart, unable to bear the disappointment, should again relapse into that dangerous state of health which threatened me so long with her loss also, and from which even now she is but slowly recovering."

"I am prepared," she replied, "to confirm all I have advanced, and what I assuredly believe the truth; the clasps you describe are in my possession;" and having produced them, she entered minutely into the circumstances which had placed Seymour, or rather Henry Montague, under her immediate care.

The evidences were too strong to admit even a shadow of doubt; the clasps were instantly averred to be his, both by lord and lady Stewart. The former was in ecstasy; the latter, affectionately clasping the hand of Mrs. Duncannon,



and pressing it to her heart, could only express her boundless gratitude in a flood of tears, and when more composed, eagerly entreated that lord Stewart and herself might be permitted to return with her to conduct Henry to the castle; but Mrs. Duncannon, rather wishing to have a private conference with him previous to the interview, promised to delay the satisfaction of presenting her son no longer than was absolutely requisite, but urged the necessity of first communicating the explanation that had taken place.

Her ladyship assented to the propriety of so doing, but expressed her apprehension that time, and their long estrangement from each other, would have totally alienated that affection which should have bound him to them; “for we lost him,” she added, “at an age when his infantine fondness was so delightful, but an age, alas! when that affection was so easily transferred to another.



another. He has doubtless learnt to love you as a mother, and will now, perhaps, regard us only as strangers, who have separated him from you—perhaps will scarcely think the title to which he is heir a compensation for the sacrifice he must make in quitting you.”

“In that case,” replied Mrs. Duncannon, “I might have kept him in ignorance of a discovery so important to his future welfare; but although educated in retirement, practised in rigid economy, which at that period best suited his prospects in life, I am safe in asserting, that the noble mind he possesses, and which will rather add to than receive lustre from a title, will, when better known, leave your ladyship no apprehension of a deviation from the duty he will owe both to you and lord Stewart. It is,” she added, “no longer fortune that would render the explanation requisite; for I restore him to you with one every way adequate to the wishes of


a young man with a soul so disinterested as is his: and of this be assured, he will appreciate the family honours which await him much less than the endearing title with which he will be permitted to distinguish you as his natural parents; and only the conviction of your being such could induce me to resign a treasure I have cherished as invaluable for so many years."

A faint blush tinged the cheek of lady Stewart as she listened to Mrs. Duncannon; and his lordship, rather hastily interrupting her, said he trusted she believed them both fully sensible of the gratitude they owed her, and the obligation in which they held themselves to her.

She wanted no acknowledgment but the satisfaction resulting from her own actions; and feeling for their natural impatience to see their child, hastened back to the expecting Seymour, whom she was about to resign, not, as she had supposed,

posed, to his natural parents—for though he was indeed the child whom they had lost, and whose loss lady Stewart had never recovered, their real claims upon him were even less powerful than those of the benevolent Mrs. Duncannon.

## CHAPTER IV.



IN the affectionate regard expressed by lord and lady Stewart, the delicate attention of Jane St. Clair, their lovely niece, the delighted satisfaction of Mrs. Duncannon, and the unbounded demonstrations of joy kept up at Dunwarden Castle from the period of his return to it, Henry was scarcely allowed time to ask his own heart if it really participated in the general happiness as much as every other individual appeared to do? To be

the beloved object thus warmly greeted was indeed most gratifying—to have a father and mother thus interested in his fate, gave rise to sentiments altogether new; for a father's care he had never known, and lord Stewart eagerly anticipated every wish, while her ladyship gazed on him with devoted fondness—but to this he *had* been accustomed, for he believed no affection for him could exceed that of Mrs. Duncannon. In Jane St. Clair, he might already promise himself the warm interest of a kind sister, but that conviction only served to remind him more forcibly of Jessy's artless affection—Jessy, whom he might see no more. Mrs. Duncannon, too, the term of her present visit at the castle expired, would leave him, and as yet he felt unequal to the separation; but that devoted friend, who, though she would not acknowledge it, looked forward no less reluctantly to the dreaded period than himself, had already determined on surprising

prising him by an event he had not dared to anticipate. She had purchased her favourite cottage at the bourn side, placed in it the worthy Margretta and the faithful Gilbert as superintendants, and designed in future passing most of her time there. Nothing could have so much contributed to reconcile Henry to his new abode and connexions, who, delighted by his now increasing spirits, no longer felt apprehensive that his alienated affections would not in time return wholly to them; and in possessing so desirable a neighbour, independent of her claims upon them, lord and lady Stewart expressed their satisfaction in the warmest terms. Knowing the extensive benevolence of her heart, it was his lordship's wish to have made over to Mrs. Duncannon the handsome property her brother had bequeathed to Henry, for whom he averred the possessions himself inherited from the late lord Stewart empowered him to provide so amply;

but this she declined, assuring him her own property was more than sufficient for her utmost wishes, and that she held those of the dead much too sacred to be revoked—"Had your lordship," she added, "arrived in our neighbourhood previous to the death of my brother, you would have found us less wealthy, but not less happy; and this remark reminds me of the regret I have often at that period felt, that an estate so extensive, and, even in ruins, so magnificent, should have been suffered to remain so many years uninhabited, and indeed unclaimed, as, previous to lord Malcolm having taken possession of it, I was given to understand no one had ever made a claim."

"It was the interest of the man who held the property in trust only," said his lordship, "to conceal, as long as he had the means of doing so from the lawful heir, information which he was well aware must deprive him of advantages,



tages, from which he had already too long reaped the benefit. The late lord Stewart died at the age of ninety, in a state of second childhood; he had never married, and survived every relative of whom he had the least knowledge; *my* father was one of those remote branches of his family, whom the law entitled to succeed his lordship in his honours and estates; but he also has been dead many years, and died without a supposition that he ought to have been in possession of both. After his death and my own marriage, I quitted Martinique, where we then resided, and removed to Lisle, at which place we were destined to be separated from our beloved Henry, whose loss long threatened the life of lady Stewart, whose delicate state of health and bad spirits obliged us again to change our abode; and having travelled through many parts of France, it was my intention to have proceeded to Italy; but symptoms of increasing indisposition rendered it  
requisite



requisite we should postpone the time of our departure, from the small town in which we then resided, longer than we should otherwise have done. Here, at the house of a gentleman from whom, as travellers, we had received much civility, I was introduced to one of the guests as his countryman: the conversation turned on Scotland—I became interested in my inquiries, and fancied I perceived a reluctance in the person I addressed to answer some of them. On the following day, I made a point of ascertaining who and what he was, and fortunately succeeded in discovering that he was in possession of an estate in the north, to which no heir could be found, and it was supposed that eventually the whole property would become his, at least for the term of his life, as no one had hitherto thought proper to dispute his right. Knowing that I was privileged to do so as heir-at-law, I lost no time in taking the proper steps to prove my claims.

claims. But the process of the law is tedious, to say nothing of the anxiety which is invariably the result—it was no easy matter to wrest from a man who was disposed to dispute my right, what he, on the other hand, wished to hold; and many were the days and nights of restless solicitude I passed in that painful interval; for although a descendant in the direct line from the Stewarts, it was sufficiently remote to throw many obstacles in the way of my success, of which I was sometimes almost hopeless; but I had embarked my whole property in the cause, and depending on its justice, determined to persevere. It was at last decided in my favour; but the completion of my wishes rather added to than diminished the now habitual depression of lady Stewart's spirits, by reviving a sense of the loss we had sustained, as we had no children to enjoy the property which it had cost us so much to attain.

“ Upon

“ Upon our arrival in Scotland, we found lord Malcolm still in possession of Dunwarden Castle, which must then indeed have been a gloomy habitation, for the unbounded expence we have been at has scarcely yet made it what such a residence ought to be ; but as his lordship obligingly offered to vacate it immediately for the necessary repairs, and lady Stewart, charmed with the situation, entreated me to remain in the neighbourhood, we took possession of the house once inhabited, as they told me, by the guardian-angel of the north—for no language could do justice to the praises of Mrs. Duncannon. How little we then supposed that this benevolent stranger was also the preserver of our Henry, and that his infant years had passed in the habitation we then owned ! Lady Madeline Sinclair,” he continued, “ incessantly regretted your continued silence, and the pretty little girl who was her constant companion often interested us by the  
anxiety

anxiety she expressed to know what had become of her benefactress and her amiable son. We were fortunately at that time spared a knowledge of his being our lamented child; for had we surmised such a blessing was in store for us, how should we have sustained the cruel suspense!"

Henry, whose heart, bounding as the conversation turned on his still fondly regretted companion of those former days, scarcely allowed lord Stewart to cease speaking, when he inquired if he was at all acquainted with lady Madeline's son?

"I heard," replied his lordship, "that a young man, whom I had occasionally seen, was a grandson of lord Malcolm, but that his lordship was unacquainted with his residence in the neighbourhood; and perhaps it was as well, for report did not speak much in his favour. However, as they remained but a very short time after we came down, I know but little of him; and when the family removed to Tantallan Castle, he followed them.

them. But it must be a great trial to his mother, not only to have him living in such a singular way, but to have so little chance of prevailing upon lord Malcolm to admit him as one of the family, which I understand he will never do; but from his lordship's appearance, I should think his own life very precarious, and I am also of opinion that his faculties are much injured. There is a favourite servant, who appeared, from my observation, to hold unbounded sway in the house, and I am fearful has too much interest with his lord to bode any good to his children, one of whom, I am told, is an exile, of whom no account has for some years been received, and in the event of whose death, young Sinclair will succeed to his grandfather's title and estates."

"But there are surely no proofs of his death?" said Mrs. Duncannon, anxiously.

"Nothing certain, I believe," was lord Stewart's reply; "but we heard a vague  
report

report that some letter had been received relative to his decease; yet in that case, I think we should have known more of it."

The bare supposition of such an event was sufficient to interest Mrs. Duncannon's movements: she had meditated a visit to lady Madeline for the purpose of claiming her youthful charge, if no cause had transpired, during her absence, to supersede her own claims upon Jessy, whose situation, as it had been represented, gave her much uneasiness. Of the character of Sinclair she had already learnt much more than she could approve, but this she dared not aver to Henry, to whom she made known her intended visit to Tantallan Castle, the present abode of lord Malcolm. His expressive eyes thanked her in ardent language; and having finally arranged every thing at her little habitation, seen the good Margretta reinstated in all the comforts she was warranted to expect on this side the grave, and taken an affectionate



tionate leave of the family at Dunwarden, she set out, with the wish of contributing in a no less degree to the happiness of Jessy, than she had done to the interest of Henry, but less sanguine as to her success.

Her removal from the bourn side had indeed been productive of real sorrow to all her favourites at the cottage, whose affliction for her loss was prophetic of what had followed that event. Scarcely had Jessy's youthful spirits been restored to their usual tenor by the affectionate attention of lady Madeline, than they were again oppressed by the sympathy she felt for her new patroness, whose anxiety for her son, together with her own want of fortitude on all occasions, had made really unhappy.

Leopold had found Frederick Sinclair apparently recovering from indisposition, but he soon discovered that his illness had proceeded partly from his own imprudence, and the impetuosity of a temper



per that could ill brook the restraint under which it was kept by a rigid but prudent tutor, who foresaw that such restriction was absolutely requisite for the future advantage of his thoughtless pupil, of whom he had long since become weary, and only retained in his house in consideration of his mother, with whose peculiar situation, respecting lord Malcolm, he was well acquainted; and dreading the effect his declining his guardianship might have on his interest with his grandfather, he continued to give advice, which was nevertheless as constantly rejected, and to reprove follies, which Sinclair as obstinately adhered to. In the train of fashionable vices, of which he professed himself the avowed champion, he could boast a degree of low cunning which enabled him not only to ingratiate himself into the favour of those whom he wished to please, but often gave him an ascendancy over more candid and ingenuous minds,

minds, of which they were not aware. He was not long in discovering that Leopold was of all characters one best suited to his views, and whose entire confidence it was essential to gain; his undisputed power in lord Malcolm's family, from which he had determined to be no longer banished, if art or stratagem could open a way to his admission, rendered him a useful acquaintance; his extravagant encomiums of lady Madeline, amounting even to adoration, proved him not only willing, but even desirous, to serve her son; and to the difference of their rank in life, which ought to have been an insurmountable barrier to the slightest intimacy, Frederick saw no objection, for his favourites were in general selected from that order of people to whom his birth and expectations should have made him a stranger. As the messenger of that mother for whom he professed an attachment that added poignancy to the separation of which he  
complained

complained so bitterly, Leopold was caressed with flattering distinction, and soon made acquainted with a list of grievances, which the faithful servant listened to with an attention that promised redress: he was determined no longer to endure the petulant harangues of a tedious preceptor, who denied him the common privileges every young man of his age and family were permitted to enjoy; he was weary of the dull monotony in which he passed his time, and impatient to know what were lady Madeline's views respecting his future destiny. This Leopold thought very natural, but he knew it was a subject on which her ladyship could not venture to converse with lord Malcolm unasked, and he also knew she was too timid, too tenacious of deciding, without his lordship's approbation, upon any plan.

Again Sinclair dwelt upon the injustice that obliged him to become an alien to that mother to whom he was so dear,  
and

and without whose society he was incapable of enjoying either health or spirits: the latter had yielded to the unnatural banishment his grandfather had imposed upon him, and the former had suffered from his impatient anxiety to be restored to lady Madeline, and which he averred every day strengthened; in short, he said, if any longer prohibited, not only from seeing, but residing with her, he would leave the country altogether, and become a wanderer in the world, since, without tie or connexions, all places were alike to him. But great as was Leopold's power at the castle, anxious as his wishes of proving himself devoted to the mother by adding every thing to the happiness of her son, for whom also he determined to evince his friendship, since admitted to such unlimited confidence, and honoured with the name of friend by Sinclair, his power extended not to procuring him admission, either to the presence of lord Malcolm,

colm, or as an inmate in the castle ; still unwilling to put a negative on the business, and desirous of diverting his mind from the extremities to which he intended to proceed, he assured him that, having now learnt in what manner he could best serve him, it should henceforth be the business of his life to promote his wishes by unwearied assiduity in his cause; and that having had the honour of making those wishes known to lady Madeline, he had little doubt but that some plan might be suggested to his satisfaction ; that, at least as far as the arrangement remained with him, he would promise Mr. Sinclair should be convinced of his zeal. Frederick was delighted, called him a worthy good fellow, whose friendship he should know how to appreciate, averring he had no idea of that paltry distinction which was too often permitted to separate spirits so much in unison with each other ; and that, possessed of rank and title, he should

glory in acknowledging such a man as his friend, by making him a public companion.

Leopold, thus encouraged to forget the difference which nevertheless existed between the supposed heir of lord Malcolm and his domestic, ventured to return the friendly pressure with which Sinclair's extended hand sealed the compact, and mentally exclaimed—"Would that lady Madeline possessed the same sentiments for me!" Emboldened by what he considered such generous proofs of her son's disposition towards him, he dared to hope she might even yet become disposed to compassionate him; he well knew how dear that son was to her, and he determined to lay both under obligations that might ensure him some portion of their esteem; he ventured to name pecuniary matters, judging that Mr. Sinclair must have many occasions for a liberal purse to support the style due to his family: he knew lord Malcolm's



colm's allowance was generous, and had no doubt but that lady Madeline would still augment it, but young gentlemen had sometimes demands upon their purses which rendered additional supplies acceptable. Sinclair had always occasion for money, and with little hesitation accepted the generous offer of his new-found friend, who gave him unlimited power over his; and having left him a sufficient sum for present exigences, and promised him the earliest information of the arrangements he had been enabled to make on his return to the castle, they parted, mutually pleased with each other.



CHAPTER V.  
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LADY Madeline, impatient to gain intelligence of her son, readily admitted the audience Leopold requested. In this interview, he spoke of the anxiety Mr. Sinclair had expressed to see her ladyship, in such terms as could not fail to increase hers to promote the meeting—"Unhappy boy!" she exclaimed, in the fervour of her agitated feelings, "and still more unhappy mother, to be thus cruelly destined to a separation so insupportable to both! Tell me," she continued, "how did you satisfy his impatient wishes? how reconcile him to the conviction you were empowered to give him, that no hope remained of reconciling my father to his residing near me?"

"Such

“Such an explanation was not necessary, lady Madeline,” said the respectful Leopold; “neither would it have been prudent, at a time when his spirits, oppressed by latent indisposition, were ill prepared to brook a disappointment to his wishes; on the contrary, I gave him hopes that such an event was not altogether unattainable; and if your ladyship will condescend to trust to my poor abilities and ardent desire of promoting your happiness, and that of Mr. Sinclair, be assured I will not neglect an opportunity which can tend to either.”

Lady Madeline was at a loss to know in what manner it could possibly be effected; still less would she willingly have been indebted to the interference of a servant, in a point so essential to her own peace of mind; but she had read the letter of which Leopold was the bearer, and every line was calculated to alarm her maternal fears for the fate of her son. He spoke of leaving his tutor's

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house,

house, and becoming a wanderer, in terms so decisive as to leave no doubt but that such was his intention: the idea alone was distraction—"Spare me," she said, with increasing agony, "the dreadful trial, if any expedient can be pointed out which will do so, and my gratitude can know no bounds."

Leopold assured her he only wanted time, and entreated she would rest satisfied that Mr. Sinclair would do nothing rashly until he had heard from him, for this he had solemnly promised at their parting; but Leopold as yet knew not the headstrong passion by which he was ever governed, and was therefore wholly unprepared for the arrival of Frederick, who, having received a severe reprimand for some part of his conduct which had been far too reprehensible to be passed over in silence by his worthy preceptor, had abruptly left his house, and proceeded to the neighbourhood of Dunwarden Castle, before any opportunity  
had

had presented itself of preparing for his reception. He had, however, the precaution to send for Leopold, who was greeted as the only friend on whom he could then rely—on whose secrecy only he might depend for the step he had been compelled to take, and whose counsel was in future to be his guide—“For never, never,” he said, “will I return to school, or leave this spot until I have seen my mother.”

“That you shall instantly do,” said Leopold; “but as you value her happiness, or your own interest with lord Malcolm, let me entreat you not to reveal your name or affinity to her ladyship under the present circumstances.”

“Call me what you will,” was the reply, “only let me be so situated that I may be permitted to enjoy occasional interviews with her.”

Donald's cottage at that moment occurring, Leopold suggested the idea of obtaining lodgings for him as a relative

of his own, until he had prepared lady Madeline for the desired interview, when a proper place could be appointed for their future meetings. This was readily assented to on the part of Frederick, who in a few hours took possession of the little apartment prepared for him, and into which he carried a heart replete with every propensity to evil; while Leopold, delighted with any plea that could give him an opportunity of conversing with lady Madeline, hastened to impart the unexpected event of her son's arrival, and the steps he had taken for his concealment.

The joy of once more embracing the child so dear to her, for a time lulled every suggestion of reason, which would otherwise have at once condemned his imprudent conduct, while her affection found many excuses for what he had done, and every thing to censure in his tutor, to whose harshness alone she readily attributed Frederick's leaving him so abruptly;  
for

for she saw him, heard his own story, and received such proofs of his ardent unabated affection as convinced her he must be faultless. But she too soon found the gratification of those clandestine meetings, though managed so adroitly by Leopold, of whom Sinclair always spoke in exalted terms; was marred by the keen reflection, that they every day continued to place her still more in the power of a man from whom she had once received an insult never to be forgotten. Her heart, *proud only* in the prerogative of her high birth, told her that Frederick Sinclair had rated much too highly the services of lord Malcolm's servant; and this she once ventured to name; but Frederick's argument again prevailed—his mother was silenced, but not convinced. To express her fears lest his too great partiality for Leopold, by misleading, should render him unmindful of his duty, and thereby induce him again to repeat the insult she had once ex-



perienced, was impossible ; for the recital of that night's transaction might be productive of consequences from which she recoiled with natural dread.

It at length occurred that the good Donald, with whom he still resided as the relative of Leopold, might at least be trusted : she would herself reveal to him the situation in which she was placed, with her hopes that a short time would enable her to learn lord Malcolm's intentions respecting her son, and in the meantime it was her wish that their interviews should be confined to his cottage. She had again urged Leopold to break the subject to his lordship, by stating the necessity of Frederick's entering upon some profession suited to his family connexions ; but Leopold, who had now other plans in view, and who was well aware such a step would render both lady Madeline and her son independent of himself, assured her that as yet no such opportunity favourable to her wishes had occurred,

occurred, of leading his lordship to the subject, and that a premature appeal to that effect could not fail to be inimical to the cause on which so much depended; neither was he quite satisfied with her intention of making her affinity to Mr. Sinclair known at the cottage. But in this she was resolute; on the fidelity of its inhabitants she could rely, and her proposed arrangement appeared to remove, in part, at least, the painful dependence she had hitherto felt on the last being in the world to whom she ought to have owed an obligation.

Frederick professed himself delighted with her new plan, but the cause of his approbation was carefully concealed: it gave him, he said, more frequent opportunities of seeing the mother to whom he was daily more attached; and this avowal could not but be grateful to her affectionate heart; nor did she, in her lovely companion, see an additional motive for the satisfaction he expressed. To

be in habits of intimacy with such a charming creature, and possess such a friend as Leopold, who he had already determined should lead him to the summit of that happiness he anticipated in the possession of his grandfather's honours, was ecstatic; and the solitary confines of a rude-built cottage became a paradise, where he might pass his hours in wooing the lovely rustic—teach her eyes of heavenly blue the language which inspired his own, until a mutual understanding proved the extent of his power, when she would only exchange the protection of the mother for that of the son.

Her simplicity at first amused, and by degrees surprised him; for he had been taught by ladies, who pride themselves on their quick penetration, to believe there was an inexpressible eloquence in his eyes, which could not long be misunderstood. It was, however, a language which the unassuming Jessy had never studied: those of Mrs. Duncannon and  
the

the beloved Seymour had always expressed the goodness of their hearts, and beamed with mild affection upon her, and her whole mind, still occupied by their remembrance, left her totally indifferent to the expression of any others. In vain, therefore, he sought to catch a glance which might be interpreted as an answer to his own: had the purity of her mind allowed her to read what was passing in his, it would have militated against his wishes; for she had been too early taught to recoil from the semblance of vice to become enamoured of it in Frederick Sinclair, whom, as the son of lady Madeline, she wished to esteem. It was needless to assure her, that in the fashionable world young women were allowed innocent freedoms, which few, however, he might have added, practised with impunity; for her timid eyes were more frequently, by the impulse of native modesty, gently averted from those who addressed her, and

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as yet wanted the privileged power to gaze again. In vain, therefore, Frederick's told her he either hoped, was pleased, or disappointed; the same uniform serenity marked hers, whenever, with increasing agitation, he had any opportunity of reading them through the long dark lashes, which added softness to them; and if, in parting with his mother and her, he pressed the hand of each, she was unconscious of the different motive by which he was actuated in so doing, and regarded it merely as a common incident. But such continued and repeated proofs of indifference only stimulated his baser passions, and his friend and counsellor was made acquainted with his extravagant attachment and frequent disappointments; but Leopold could only advise that patience he was himself destined to practise. His presumptuous ill-placed affection grew daily more refractory under the restraint it imposed upon him: he also had endeavoured

voured to construe lady Madeline's expressions of gratitude into warmer sentiments—had dared to raise his eyes to hers; but although their mild sweetness solicited the confidence of every other being who addressed her, they never failed to awe him into that respectful deference due from a servant to the daughter of lord Malcolm. Great as was the ascendancy he had gained over her son, he had never yet acquired resolution to name to him the object of his silent adoration, though he had long since made Mr. Sinclair the confidant of an ill-fated attachment, which he averred was, from being hopeless, alike the destruction of his health and peace.

Frederick often listened to his love-lorn tale, and as often blamed his want of spirit in becoming the dupe of any woman who could reject so fine a fellow; still, being no farther interested in his affairs than as they concerned himself, and too much engaged with his own, he had  
never



never solicited the name of his unkind mistress, which was carefully concealed on the part of his friend: but patience was one of the cardinal virtues which Sinclair had never possessed, and finding procrastination insured no success, or even promised it, he resolutely determined to acquaint Donald with the honour intended him, by a prompt confession of his love for Jessy, at the same time demanding his influence over her. "Hitherto," he continued, "she has obstinately rejected all my advances; but you, as her father, knowing the advantages of such an alliance to her whole family, will unquestionably use your authority, and compel her to listen to me."

Donald's vacant stare was supposed to be the result of such an unexpected and liberal offer from the son of lady Madeline Sinclair, and the prospect of one day seeing her the wife of lord Malcolm; for such he had made no hesitation of acquainting his simple honest host must eventually

eventually be the case, as it was too certain the present lord Malcolm had no other heir. It was indeed surprise that chained the tongue of Donald, and gave to his fixed eyes an expression almost amounting to terror, when Sinclair, impatient for his reply, rudely demanded if his condescension had actually deprived him of speech? Roused by the remark, Donald modestly answered, it was a condescension, no doubt, on his part; but that he trusted neither his own gratitude to his lady-mother, nor the duty which as a poor man he owed to lord Malcolm, would ever permit him to lose sight of a soldier's honour, by encouraging a young gentleman of such high birth to forget what was due to himself and family. "Jessy is too young, sir," he added, respectfully, "to think of love."

"Leave me to decide that," said the impetuous Sinclair; "I only want you to make her acquainted with my proposals, and

and command her to receive me in a different manner from what she has hitherto done: every father is privileged to command the affections of his daughter."

"Then have I no command over Jessy," Donald might have replied, but prudence still kept a faithful watch over the seal of that secret, which no unguarded moment had ever broken; for as yet, only to Mrs. Duncannon had he revealed the manner in which Jessy had been confided to his care by a distracted father and the last breath of her expiring mother; and in revealing it to that excellent friend and preserver of his family, he had been actuated by a circumstance which made her advice of the utmost importance, since he found his own humble knowledge inadequate to dictate what he ought to do. Hers had been given him in a manner so satisfactory, that Donald's mind was restored to a state of tranquillity which he had hoped would  
never

never again be interrupted, until the hand of Providence should remove the veil which at present concealed every circumstance connected with the destiny of his adopted child, and which Mrs. Duncannon had assured him she firmly believed would one day be the case, since fidelity and worth like his could never be permitted to descend to the grave unrequited.

Donald had declared he asked no other reward than to see his beloved Jessy restored to her lost family ; but Mrs. Duncannon was no longer present to animate his spirits with such hopes. She had, it was true, provided for several emergencies which might occur in her absence, and by which instructions he should have proceeded ; but one had now arisen for which no provision was made. Mrs. Duncannon's last letter to lady Madeline had spoken of her return being uncertain, and Donald felt that he more than ever required her kind counsel.

Thoughtful

Thoughtful and uneasy, he still mused while Sinclair urged his interference, and he yet continued to find excuses for naming the subject to Jessy, who as usual accompanied lady Madeline in her daily visits to the cottage, from which Frederick had long since banished the undisturbed happiness, once its treasured inmate.

Edward, whom he ever treated with contempt, and often derision, seldom entered the abode to which his infant steps had so often bounded with alacrity, but when he knew Frederick was to be absent; and Margretta, knowing that it was on his account only Edward was so often missing, when, labour finished, he might have been with them, had taken more than a common dislike to her new lodger, whose conduct every day more plainly revealed outlines of a character which could not fail to be productive of increasing wretchedness to his too partial mother. His preceptor  
had

had written to lady Madeline, stating the circumstances which had preceded Mr. Sinclair's removal from his house; and having revealed many proofs, not only of his ingratitude, but flagrant instances of his shameful conduct, assured her he should have long since declined the honour of his guardianship, had he not too highly respected her ladyship to pain her feelings, while it was possible to refrain from doing so.

This letter, which Sinclair partly expected, he was prepared to intercept: thus lady Madeline remained a stranger to its contents and the extent of his vicious habits, but which he took little pains to conceal from her more immediate inspection, now that he was so near to her; but this only added to her dread of lord Malcolm by any chance discovering he was so near her. In the neighbourhood, he was known only as the relation of Leopold, and as such trampled over every law, human and divine. Leopold's mind, uncontaminated



minated by bad example, had hitherto "leaned to virtue's side," but his new companion had given a turn to every sentiment: fashionable oaths had reconciled him to hear every thing good and holy profaned with indifference; he acknowledged a predilection for gaming, but it was only, in reality, as it gave him an opportunity of contributing more largely to Sinclair's purse; and to the bottle he had no longer an objection, for over this Frederick often drank success to lord Malcolm's hasty departure: "'Tis then, my fine fellow," he said, "you shall prove my gratitude; but I am afraid sorrow is a slow poison, for methinks it is a long time settling old Crusty's business."

There had been a period when Leopold would have listened with horror to such a speech; but as he daily grew less worthy of the partiality of his lord, so his attachment to him became each day more enfeebled. His daring presumptuous  
love

love of lady Madeline, he knew, lord Malcolm would resent with dignified pride, and that his own dismissal must follow, with every degrading mark of his lordship's resentment: against that love he had no longer a wish to struggle; and the difference in their situation became every day less formidable, for his now vitiated mind had ventured to believe Frederick would strengthen his cause when he solicited his interest. But among the new train of ideas which this strong infatuation had given an ascendancy over him, dissimulation was not the least baneful; it now whispered the necessity of waiting until some new opportunity should have given him additional power over Sinclair; nor was it long before his confidence was taxed by his friend with a new species of villany. This was the acknowledged seduction of Mary Scot, who had sacrificed the honest worth of Edward, on the shrine of illicit love,

love, to the more accomplished traitor, who triumphed in her fall, but who, basely shrinking from the just reproofs he was warranted to expect from lady Madeline, now eagerly entreated Leopold to aid him in the assertions he had prevailed on Mary to make, when concealment was no longer possible, that Edward was the criminal. This he readily promised him, not a little pleased to be entrusted with a secret which would entitle him to claim the same indulgence from Frederick, when the sudden death of poor Austin, the venerable steward of lord Malcolm, opened a still wider field for the prosecution of their vile plans. The strange alteration in Leopold's conduct had not escaped the penetrating wisdom of old age, but he was satisfied in keeping a watchful eye on all that passed, and trusting his own vigilance would enable him to counteract whatever might be going wrong,

wrong, he delayed too long the precautions which, taken in time, might have frustrated the plans already engendering.

## CHAPTER VI.

.....

WHEN first attacked by the indisposition which was to terminate his earthly pilgrimage, he sent for lady Madeline; but on her arrival, which was with his messenger, had only power to say, in disjointed sentences—"Lady Madeline, I die wretched—all is not right; beware of——"

"Of whom?" she asked, in breathless impatience, perceiving the difficulty with which he articulated, and dreading she knew not what.

Struggling hard for that breath which was fast receding, he convulsively grasped the hand in which she held his, cold as the senseless marble, and fixed his dim eyes upon her face, pale with terror.

Perhaps his eternal welfare demanded that such a moment should have been devoted exclusively to his God; but it was too evident that fidelity to his lord triumphed over every selfish motive, even in the agonies of death; and if he erred, *Pity*, in weeping over lady Madeline's disappointment, would plead with *Mercy* to blot out the transgressions, since it withheld the power thus misapplied; for Austin's last effort to speak ended in the heart-drawn sigh that consigned the vital spark to immortality—his venerable form to the shades of death—and lady Madeline to endless regret.

No feigned semblance of sorrow actuated those who were left to lament  
his

his loss : lord Malcolm, almost a perfect recluse in his own apartments, brooded over the death of an aged and faithful servant with real concern ; every domestic in the household estimated his worth too highly not to mourn with sincerity ; but time, when it had weakened a remembrance of what the worthy Austin *had* been, in their minds, still witnessed the kind regret with which lady Madeline and the affectionate Jessy wept over his memory ; and to his loss was added that of their excellent friend, Mrs. Duncannon.

The letter which announced the little probability of her return to the bourn side, while her brother's health remained in so precarious a state, had been a source of much concern, but the knowledge of her having actually left England, together with the arrival of her friend in the north, was a trial which had put their fortitude to a painful test.

Jessy's health, for a time, threatened



to become the sacrifice of her separation from those she so fondly loved, and her greatest consolation arose from being permitted the indulgence of weeping over their loss on the affectionate bosom of Margretta, who so sincerely sympathized in her affliction; neither was lady Madeline less interested for her, as Mrs. Duncannon's friendship and presence would have been no less essential to her own comforts, since new causes of vexation and sorrow were daily accumulating.

She rarely saw lord Malcolm, to whom society appeared a burthen from which he had determined to free himself; and, in consequence of his entire seclusion, Leopold had assumed a degree of authority, which she already saw would be inimical to her peace. On the plea of some communication from her son, he was constantly obliging her to hold conversations, which she would gladly have evaded, but that this was to impress him with an idea, that she remembered  
what

what had once passed, and was apprehensive of a repetition; but as he gradually appeared more presuming in his manner of addressing her, she veiled her surmises of the dreaded motive under additional reserve on her own part, determined, since she had no other protection on which she could rely, to awe him into respectful obedience by that dignity which, properly supported, could not fail to be a shield against the insults of inferiority. From that son in whom she had rested every prospect of happiness for her widowed heart, she was likely to derive far less comfort than her affection for him had prompted her to expect, though as yet she knew not, nor could have been taught to believe, that Frederick Sinclair, in violation of every sacred law, could have robbed an aged father of the only treasure which sweetened poverty, braced his nerves to labour, and cheered the evening of life; that, not satisfied with having robbed a

virtuous soul of innocence, he had basely contaminated the once pure mansion of that artless soul, by making it the still more guilty abode of deliberate falsehood and dissimulation; and that he had, by so doing, blasted the hitherto spotless character of an excellent young man, whom his villany was to make an exile from his home and native country; for the roses of unblemished health no longer gave love-inspiring beauty to the faded cheek of poor Mary—the sun no longer smiled on her artless gaiety, for Mary smiled no more, save when, the dusky shades of evening affording temporary concealment to her altered form, with trembling steps she sought the fatal bower in which Frederick waited her arrival, and when in listening to his insidious tale, a languid one might occasionally pass over those features which she vainly attempted to animate for the pleasure of her already satiated seducer, who, however, still renewed his nightly promises,

mises, faithless as they were, of giving her wealth and honour when the death of lord Malcolm should empower him to acknowledge her as his affianced wife : till then, secrecy, inviolable secrecy, could alone save him from ruin—herself from future disappointment ; and Mary nightly returned to her wretched pillow, to lament, in secret anguish, the necessity of concealing what, if allowed to reveal, would, she innocently thought, reconcile her aged father to the infamy she had brought on his grey hairs. But this was not permitted ; and Mary, who had already become criminal, was destined to be more guilty also : she had coolly repulsed proofs of ardent affection, which she once prized so highly in the honest untaught Edward, till the more polished villain artfully instilled in her youthful imagination the difference between them ; she was now to accuse the innocence and integrity of a man who, still

loving her to distraction, would have protected, but never disgraced her; she was to prejudice her father against the being whom he had always respected, and to whose union with his child he had raised no other barrier than their extreme youth and his own inability to assist them, or relieve the poverty which must be the result of a growing family. It was easy to persuade him that love had destroyed the barrier which prudence had erected, but not so easy to reconcile the upright integrity of the injured Edward to become a mark for the finger of scorn and public derision: he well knew the villain who had spread the wide contagion in his little region of promised happiness—love and revenge struggled in his manly heart for empire; but Mary was for ever lost to him, and though revenge bade him expiate his own wrongs even in the blood of Sinclair, love interceded for the father of  
Mary's

Mary's child—the man to whom she had given the polluted heart which, though unworthy of him, he still idolized.

He had marked the spot where she nightly wandered, and determined once more to trace her footsteps; that if happily some engagement might keep the fell destroyer from his appointment, he could bid her a last adieu; for a few hours only remained to that which was to see him depart from his loved, his native village. Perhaps fortunately for both, Sinclair passed the evening with Leopold, and Mary was too sick to leave her solitary room; through the little casement of which, shaded by the woodbine which encircled the broken panes, and concealed its guilty inhabitant, a dim lamp shed its imperfect rays. Edward, with an aching heart, drew nigh to the well-remembered window; heavy dews had given fragrance to the clustering vine, near whose thick foliage he had placed himself to catch a glance



of her he still loved, but must see no more—but its sweetness was at that moment unheeded, and sight became the only faculty of which he was sensible.

On the rude-formed chair, over whose back he had so often leaned in guileless chat, was seated the altered object of his anxious care. For a few moments she appeared wholly lost in thought, then rising slowly from her seat, crossed her little chamber, opened a small box, and returned to the table, on which, with trembling hesitation, she placed some articles of needlework.

Again she resumed her seat, and looking anxiously around, as if fearful of some intruding eye, slowly unfolded the work before her. Edward knew her father must have long since retired to bed; he beheld Mary for the last time, and felt that only one word from her, one kind farewell, would lessen the anguish he then felt at leaving her for ever, and had raised his hand for the purpose of  
gently

gently tapping at the window, when a sight that palsied every limb compelled his nerveless arm to drop its hold.

Mary, with streaming eyes, gazed on an infant's cap which her trembling hand had taken from off the table; in an instant she threw it wildly from her, and clasping her hands, concealed the woe-worn face that too plainly shewed her sense of guilt. Memory may brood over sorrow, injuries, or death, until it has learnt to bear with fortitude the ills it cannot cure; but there are miseries of which we cannot bear ocular demonstration, and Edward shrunk from that before him. He indeed still loved the offender, but would never countenance the fault; he forgave the injury done to himself, but could never forget the crime; and since to speak to her was now, he found, impossible, he could only compassionate her distress, pray fervently for her future peace, and fly precipitately

G 6

cipitately from that spot in which his own was for ever wrecked.

Mary, unconscious of any misery but her own, resumed her mournful employment, for it was only when every eye but hers was closed in sleep she had resolution to make the necessary preparations for the innocent victim who, stigmatized with a mother's crime through life, was to hold no place in society exempt from the contumely which marked its birth.

The morning was, however, to add keenness to her silent sorrow: Edward's flight was soon made known, and Sinclair, exulting in the success of his well-planned stratagem, returned with more than usual vivacity to his evening's appointment with the deluded Mary, who having been too often accused of still loving Edward more than himself, notwithstanding the fatal proof he could boast to the contrary, was now compelled

to

to bury deep in her own bosom the additional sting his absence inflicted, which, like her former sorrow, had festered by concealment.

Elate with his cruel conquest over both, Frederick returned at a late hour to Leopold, with whom he was to spend the evening as a guest in the apartment over which he one day expected to reign as lord; for since the death of Austin, Leopold had become less circumspect, and as no one had admittance to his lordship but himself, neither host nor visitor had anything to apprehend from meeting in that part of the castle appropriated to the now faithless servant, whose once honourable principles were too far injured to admit of his becoming a patient hearer of the ecstacies resulting from favoured love, exultingly described by the licentious Sinclair, who having plied the bottle with his usual encomiums upon its vigorating powers, taxed Leopold with want of confidence in conceal-  
ing

ing from a friend, faithful as himself, the name of his obdurate mistress, the more especially as it might be in his power to assist him in points of gallantry.

Thus encouraged, Leopold essayed to pronounce the name of lady Madeline; but, as if the last spark of honour was not even yet extinct—that a remembrance of what he owed to lord Malcolm for accumulated favours and undiminished kindness, to which he was making so base a return, arose in the form of self-condemnation, his faltering lips denied a passport to the hallowed name; but he was eloquent in expressions of gratitude for the friendly offer of assistance, and only trusted he would never revoke what he had then promised. The sparkling glass was at that moment raised to the fevered lips of the half-intoxicated Sinclair, who, by its potent powers, swore an oath of allegiance to his cause, which even the practised blasphemer would have held  
too

too sacred to violate in his sober moments.

The compact thus awfully sealed, the last shade of remorse evaporated in the fumes of another glass, the hitherto important secret was revealed, and Frederick found he had, by the tenor of his sacrilegious oath, pledged himself either to unite his own mother to the domestic of lord Malcolm, or—recoil not, nature, while I trace the sentence!—never to rest until she was levelled with the guilty Mary, by the united powers of Leopold and himself.

As it very rarely occurred that Sinclair's evening pleasures could stand the test of the morning's reflection, he was less surprised that his unceasing accuser, conscience, as usual, intimated he had done wrong, when having slept off the effects of his night's debauchery, he lay in supine indolence long after the sun had thrown its invigorating beams around his little chamber, and called forth



forth every other inhabitant of the cottage to their morning's occupation.

Leopold had been a useful friend, and there was still much for him to do, but he now found he had indeed rated his service very high, when he exacted such a reward as the hand of lady Madeline Sinclair. It was true, he had no objection to acknowledge him as an acquaintance in public, and one whom he might hereafter honour with a seat in his own carriage, and treat in the most familiar manner, by talking loud enough with him for every body to hear the conversation, and laughing still louder, because, in so doing, he should only imitate fashionable young men, who had introduced the mode of filling their barouches, phaetons, &c. with pugilists of the greatest notoriety, and men whose low and infamous characters were best suited to convince a nation how widely many of the present nobility differed from those of their ancestors, who were  
wont

wont to add dignity and lustre to the British senate ; but there was something repugnant to his feelings in the bare idea of acknowledging Leopold as his future father. His oath was nevertheless irrevocable, but his promise was limited to no period ; and with the happy *nonchalance* that had hitherto carried him through so many difficulties, he endeavoured to persuade himself that some unforeseen event might yet occur to set him free—" And at all events, my fine fellow," he added mentally, " you must assist me in clearing a shorter road to the title of lord Malcolm, before you have much to expect from me."

He had already planned and rejected many schemes which might tend to his success ; but the persevering indifference of Jessy, notwithstanding he had given his mother many opportunities of perceiving, if inclined to do so, his growing attachment to her favourite, roused his indignation.

nation. To be foiled by the daughter of such a rustic—a girl who, but that she had been too much pampered by the notice of great people on account of her extreme beauty, would have thought herself honoured by his attention, was insufferable; neither was his pride or passion to be longer trifled with, and he determined, as the surest mode of success, to make lady Madeline the confident of his increasing affection, by stating that a return was essential to his peace, and soliciting her approbation, as she valued his happiness.

To his mother Frederick had seldom pleaded in vain, but in the present instance too many obstacles presented themselves to warrant her sanction to a proposal she deemed so truly absurd; but her remonstrances only rendered him more violent: he ventured to hint that her ladyship, at his age, had been as little tenacious of rank or equality; and that, from the situation in which he  
was

was placed, by the *excessive indulgence and liberality* of his grandfather, it was not likely he might ever be entitled to aspire to any lady beyond the rank of a cottager; that her ladyship's partiality for Jessy, he conceived, authorized his acknowledging an equal regard, nor would he revoke the determination he had made of gaining her affections.

Lady Madeline asserted that the affection she bore Jessy, and which her own merits had rendered her so deserving of, gave her a powerful interest in her fate; that she should rejoice to see her placed, by a suitable marriage, in a situation deserving of so much goodness, but that she well knew the haughty spirit of lord Malcolm would never brook such an alliance. "Is it not, Frederick," she continued, "the fatal rock on which our family happiness has been wrecked? Has it not already made my brother an exile, myself a wretch dependent on a still more wretched father, and you, my poor boy,

boy, the inmate of a humble cottage, and that even under a feigned name? Would you also forfeit the pretensions you will perhaps soon have to the title and estate of lord Malcolm, for of your uncle's return I have no longer a hope? At present we know not what may be your grandfather's intention respecting yourself; but of this be assured, your marriage with Jessy must for ever seal your prospects, and having disinherited you also, lord Malcolm may give to his favourite Leopold that property which by right is ours, for I have my doubts if his professions to you are sincere. If so, why does he hesitate to make some effort for your advantage himself, and continually throw fresh obstacles in the way of my leading to the subject?"

"Beware, madam," said Frederick, with a degree of asperity to which from him she was unused, "how you mistrust that worthy creature, and be assured, neither you nor I have a friend more warmly

warmly interested in our cause. I am satisfied of his sincerity, and have only to wish you gave him less reason to complain of that *hauteur* which is alone reserved for him, while every other person is eloquent in proclaiming the affability of your manners towards them: he is too sensible of your superiority to require being daily reminded of it."

"But I shall nevertheless continue to do so," returned lady Madeline, with warmth, "while I see the necessity. Those who have experienced my affability, Frederick," she continued, "have never proved themselves unworthy of it, by violating the bounds of that respect due to the daughter of lord Malcolm."

"Nor, perhaps," replied Sinclair, "has lady Madeline owed to those people the obligations which bind her to the servant of lord Malcolm."

The cruel irony was too pointed—the little spirit she had assumed sank under the keen reproach, and bursting into tears,



tears, she exclaimed—"Ungrateful boy ! was it not enough that destiny and my own unguarded rashness, in marrying before reason could dictate my choice, had left me no protection save yours, that you also must add to the bitterness of my fate? The cruel restriction shall, however, be instantly removed ; I will no longer suffer my own fears for your welfare, since you have none for yourself, to bias my conduct—no longer hesitate to acquaint my father with your present residence—no longer suffer my own timidity to lay me under an obligation to his unworthy servant or a thankless child."

Awed by her threat of disclosing his present situation, which must lead to a discovery of the disgraceful motive for which he left his tutor's house, Sinclair affected the utmost contrition for his fault—alleged that only his love of Jessy could have made him thus unguarded—kissed off the tears he termed  
sacred

sacred emblems of her affection; and was at last referred to Donald, in her name, for that sanction which her own judgment still decidedly withheld, although her injudicious partiality compelled her to promise it should follow that of Jessy's father.

Donald was again assailed, and to his extreme vexation saw the shield under which he had so long veiled his disapprobation withdrawn by the misjudging kindness of lady Madeline. "I am sensible," said the good old man, "of her ladyship's condescension and the honour you intended us, but there are reasons which oblige me to act as I have done. I shall however see your lady-mother: if, after having done so, she still wishes it, and Jessy gives her consent, mine must of necessity follow."

Sinclair was not quite satisfied with this evasion: what could Donald have to communicate? Mary, like a restless spectre, was ever present in imagination, and  
though

though Edward's flight had confirmed his guilt to the world, he sometimes fancied both Donald and Margretta suspected him to be the culprit. But he could start no objection to the conference; and Donald, finding that further evasion on his part was impossible, set out for the castle with the credentials Mrs. Duncannon had provided for any emergency which might occur in her absence, at one moment regretting he was compelled to disavow what he had hitherto so proudly boasted, being the father of such a lovely creature, who would perhaps now accuse him of having so long deceived her with a false title, and at others trusting the time was at hand when he should see her acknowledged by a family of which she would be an ornament. By Mrs. Duncannon's direction at parting, he was, when it became necessary to do so, to present her letter to lady Madeline, as an introduction to the further information he was empowered

ered to give her relative to Jessy; and having solicited and as readily obtained a private interview with her ladyship, he assured her only Mr. Sinclair's having delivered him a message from herself, and his own determination to take no refusal from Jessy, could have emboldened him to trouble her with a visit which he had always hoped his honoured Mrs. Duncannon would have been present at, as he found how much he should want her kind advice in the present business—"For your ladyship," he added, "not knowing my heart so well, may think I have done wrong, and had some base motive for concealing it so long."

Lady Madeline, supposing that he alluded to the detention of a letter which he at that moment delivered to her, and willing to spare his feelings, answered, she was satisfied his motive was a good one, and as the letter was safe, it was perhaps of little consequence that it should have been thus long in his possession.

“As to the letter, my lady,” he replied, “it was only to be given to you when circumstances rendered it needful. Mrs. Duncannon named several by which I was to be guided, but that which obliges me to bring it now, she would never have thought of. However, your ladyship will know better how to act when you have read it, and I shall wait your commands.”

Astonished at the singular preface to her letter, lady Madeline impatiently broke the seal, and with still greater astonishment perused the contents:

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“When this letter reaches your ladyship, some transaction will have occurred to render it requisite you should be made acquainted with a circumstance that cannot fail both to surprise and interest you; for having always considered Donald as the father of Jessy, you would perhaps be incredulous

credulous were the assertion to come from any person on whose veracity you could not depend, that he is not even related to her; and the affectionate regard you have already evinced for that sweet girl convinces me you cannot fail to be deeply interested, when I shall aver that there are strong grounds for believing she has claims of a very powerful nature upon your own protection. Are you prepared to hear me affirm that I believe her to be the granddaughter of lord Malcolm? Could I have substantiated this conviction beyond the power of doubt, I had proudly come forth in support of her cause: there are, however, testimonies sufficient to support my opinion of the truth, and I have little doubt, that having heard what the worthy Donald has to communicate, but that you will be of my opinion. In that case, I would not presume to dictate to your judgment in acting, because it is impossible I should



know to what event you will owe the discovery ; but should it be of a nature that cannot fully elucidate the facts in question, and which are requisite to prove her affinity to your family, let me entreat you not to withdraw the veil which has hitherto happily kept her ignorant that she owed Donald only gratitude for his faithful discharge of the trust reposed in him by her unfortunate parents, in his care of her for so many years. He has carefully preserved a valuable gem, of which perhaps you have some knowledge : had he been equally fortunate in securing the address which was given him with it, both you and I had been spared the painful suspense from which I would carefully shield my young friend. Again, therefore, I entreat, unless you are privileged to present her as your adored niece to lord Malcolm, that she may be suffered to remain the humble Jessy I committed to your care, till circumstances enable me  
to

to claim her again at your hands, when it is my intention to remove her altogether from the humble abode which, as she advances in years, will ill suit her cultivated mind. Should no future event in life place her in a higher sphere, as my adopted child she shall share what I possess. My warmest affections have ever been hers, but the lively interest I take in her little story will make me a joyful participator in her reverse of prospects, should it be allowed. Your ladyship will, I am persuaded, give a candid hearing to the bearer of my letter, and it may be that his account will carry conviction to those who are interested in the elucidation so important to Jessy, and, for her sake, to the happiness of

“Your ladyship’s

“Very humble servant,

“HELEN DUNCANNON.”

## CHAPTER VII.



SCARCELY could lady Madeline allow herself time to finish the letter, the contents of which had both surprised and delighted her; still less could she restrain the powerful impulse which induced her, in the first moments of her enthusiastic joy, to impart to the unconscious Jessy the discovery she had made, until she remembered Donald had yet much to communicate, which it was requisite she should know before any steps could be taken to confirm what she wished to establish beyond doubt. So prepared, she already felt to believe Mrs. Duncannon had more than mere supposition of Jessy being a branch of  
their

their family, and as such the offspring of her fondly-regretted and persecuted brother, who must have a thousand claims upon her warmest affections. One moment she believed that only the force of blood could have attached her so strongly to the lovely Jessy, and the next she blessed that which had given rise to the discovery.—“Tell me, my good Donald,” she impatiently exclaimed, “all that you know of my dear unfortunate brother, for I am prepared to believe that Jessy must indeed have been his child.”

“I would not willingly disappoint your ladyship’s hopes,” said the delighted Donald, “but my information does not extend to proofs of her being such, else indeed had I long since explained them; but what I know, my lady, you shall hear and judge from. It is now eighteen years since my regiment was quartered in Martinique, a French island in the West-Indies, in which, as well as

many others, I had served my king and country faithfully; and I was still willing to do so, for I always loved a soldier's life; but a bad complaint, which the doctors said the climate would increase, obliged me to solicit for my discharge, and as my time was out for which I enlisted, there was not much difficulty in obtaining it, through the interest of my good captain. I had been waiting some weeks for a passage to England, after every thing was settled for my going home, when the captain's lady, who had always been very kind to my wife, came to our hut and asked Margretta if she was willing to take charge of another child, for Edward was then a baby only thirteen months old, and still at the breast, your ladyship. Madam appeared to have been crying very much, and before my wife, who was looking at me, had answered her, she said—'I am sure you will do so, when I tell you it must otherwise perish, for its own mother is dying,

dying, and I know no person to whose care I would trust the sweet babe but yourselves.' We both assured her we would do any thing to oblige her or the dying lady, but reminded her we expected to sail in a few days. 'Never mind that,' she replied; 'the present moment is of the utmost consequence to a distressed family, and you must go with me to satisfy a dying saint.' Margretta went off with her, and in about half an hour I received a message to follow—but oh! my lady, how shall I tell you what distress I was a witness to! Never, never shall I forget the dying mother of Jessy or her distracted father!"

The recital proved how keenly it was even then remembered, since large tears chased each other over the rude furrows of his honest face, and grief for a moment choked his utterance.

Lady Madeline, agitated by the various sensations passing in her own mind, marked the sincerity of his feeling heart,



and in her own paid a grateful tribute ; but dreading an interruption to the explanation she was so much interested in, she waited in silent expectation for the sequel.

“ Almost,” he continued, “ in the last agonies of death, supported in the arms of her husband, whose face, pale with sickness, and the picture of sorrow, was turned towards her with frantic looks, lay such an angel as these eyes had never seen. Jessy is called beautiful, my lady, but except her heavenly eyes, which are indeed like, she has never yet looked like her mother. By the side of the bed sat Margretta, suckling the infant, and near her my captain’s lady—all, all in tears. Not knowing what it meant, but as much disposed to cry as the rest, though ashamed to do so, I stood silently looking on, till the gentleman beckoned me to come close to him.—‘ Are you willing,’ he said, in a low voice, ‘ to let your wife take charge of that helpless infant ?’

‘ Certainly,

‘Certainly, sir,’ I answered, ‘if it is your wish.’—‘You are going to England,’ he added.—I replied I was in a day or two.—‘Will you then, in the presence of all here,’ he said, ‘bind yourself in a solemn promise to convey the child to the place I shall direct you to, and deliver with her the letter I shall entrust to your care?’—‘Most solemnly I promise to do so, and whatever else you may require of me.’—‘And as you keep that promise,’ said the dying lady, ‘may Heaven reward you!’—Never had I heard such a voice; it seemed as if an angel had spoken to me, and I continued listening. For a moment she was silent; then raising her eyes with such a pitying look to her husband, she said—‘Now, Alphonso, I die happy!’

“Oh, it was my brother!” exclaimed lady Madeline, unable longer to suppress her agitated feelings; “’tis his name, and it could only have been his Adela of whom you speak.”

“ I never heard madam’s name,” replied Donald, “ but I did not lose a word she said, for it was with much difficulty she spoke at all.—‘ I shall indeed die happy,’ she added, ‘ if you will only promise not to detain them one hour in this hateful climate, when there is an opportunity for them to leave it.’—‘ The ship will sail in two days from this, my love,’ replied the gentleman; ‘ an hour will complete my letters, and since it is your wish that my cherub shall go——’ His heart was too full to say more, but, as if she wished to comfort him, she said—‘ I only study your happiness—you will return to her, and bless me for having saved her life—here she must die with her wretched mother. In your letter, speak of me to your sister, and tell her, with my last expiring breath I consigned my infant to her care. And now, Alphonso, I must see my hapless child once more.’ Margretta rose instantly from her seat, and held the sleeping

sleeping babe before her. While she looked on it, her lips moved as if in silent prayer; she then took it in her feeble arms, pressed it to her lips, and with such a sigh as made every heart bleed that heard it, she hid her face in her husband's bosom. Margretta took the child from her in silence, for indeed no one had power to speak. Tears streamed down the gentleman's face as he bent over her, when a second sigh, more loud, made us all start; a third directly followed, but it was the last she ever gave, for in a few minutes her husband, looking wildly round him, exclaimed—'It is all over, and my misery is now complete.'

"It was in vain we spoke to him, or begged he would leave the room with me; he neither answered, nor indeed appeared to hear what was said; but the next day he sent again for me, and appeared much more composed. When I first entered the room, taking from his writing-

writing-desk a large letter, he said—  
‘ My good friend, you have been too well recommended for me to doubt your integrity; I have therefore only to repeat the entreaties of a frantic lost father, to that of the departed angel you yesterday saw, that you will protect an orphan child until you reach England; convey her in safety to the friend for whom this letter is directed, who will handsomely reward both you and your wife; but she must remain with her while a nurse is required—this she has already promised me she will do. To secure you from trouble, and to satisfy my friend that all is right, take with you this seal; he will know it too well to doubt your having received it from me.”

Donald produced the seal, and lady Madeline no sooner beheld the rich cornelian, set in massy gold, on which were blazoned the family arms of lord Malcolm, than her agitation became extreme. She had seen that very seal suspended  
to

to his lordship's watch, and knew he had given it to Alphonso as a relic of his mother's—that her brother prized it too highly ever to have parted with it but upon some important occasion, and could not for a moment doubt his having done so to certify the child being his own. “But tell me,” she impatiently demanded, “who was the friend to whom this should have been delivered, and why, with such credentials to prove her real birth, has Jessy still been only known as your daughter?”

“There it is, your ladyship,” returned Donald: “knowing that I meant most religiously to keep my promise of delivering both the child and the letter in safety to the gentleman who was to have charge of her in England, I never thought of asking his name, or endeavouring to read the direction of the letter which was then given to me; for at that time I was too fearful of losing a  
word



word of my orders; but he only said—  
‘ When you leave London, you will probably return to your native country.’—  
I told him it was my intention to have done so as soon as I landed in England, but that I should stay till Margretta was discharged from her office as nurse. He seemed too deep in thought to notice what I said, for in a moment after, striking his forehead with a violence that frightened me, he said—‘ Happy Scotland! never will the child of misery set foot again on your still-loved shores: yet, oh my God! if I have indeed suffered sufficiently for my error, let my child but live to speak conviction to a cruel father! If remorse is ever suffered to touch his heart, may it be conveyed through the means of my infant Jessy!’

“ I need no other conviction,” said lady Madeline, “ that she is indeed my brother’s child; and now I do her an injustice in withholding, even for a moment,

ment, truths too obvious to be longer concealed, and which my own heart so proudly acknowledges."

"It is not for me to advise your ladyship," returned Donald, respectfully, "but I do not think all I have yet said could induce lord Malcolm to feel satisfied that Jessy is his son's child, and he may perhaps punish me as an impostor: but that is not all; Jessy having discovered that I at least am not her father, will grow tired of us, and become unhappy; for if she is not indeed your relation, she will, I fear, never know to whom she does belong, for the sea will never give back the box which held the only certain proofs I had of her family; for, as I was telling your ladyship, after the gentleman had dismissed me, with many more entreaties that I would be kind to his poor little babe, I returned to our hut. Margretta was still at the captain's house with the child, and being quite alone, I began to think of what had  
passed,

passed, and what a charge I had undertaken, when terror lest any accident or misfortune should befall the babe, before I reached her friends to give her up, made me more than half repent my promise; but when I recollected her angel-mother, that my promise had made her quite happy, and comforted her father, I resolved to do my best, and prayed God to preserve my life, and that of my wife, for the infant's sake. I then looked at the seal, which I thought must be very valuable; and as I understood it would clearly prove to the gentleman I was to take it to, that there was no fraud in the business in which I was concerned, I thought the best way to secure it was to fasten it safely round my neck, where I could conceal it from every body till I arrived in England. The letters I wrapped very carefully in some old linen, together with my discharge, locking them up in a small box, which held all we were worth in the world, our  
clothes

clothes and a small sum of money, which the captain's lady had given Margretta, as she said, from the gentleman, just to pay our travelling expences to London, which was all we should require, as when there, we should be well paid. This done, and my thoughts a little more settled, I became anxious to know who the gentleman was for whom I had bound myself to do the service; not from the hope of my reward, but in pity to his sorrow; for as yet I had only learnt that his name was Malcolm."

Again lady Madeline became faint with agitation; but she suppressed her feelings, and Donald continued—"All, however, I could gain, was his being a subaltern officer, who had lately arrived to join his regiment in the island, but was known to no one, though every heart bled for his misfortunes, as it appeared the ship in which he came out was lost in a frightful storm; that himself and lady, with a few of the crew only, were

were saved in the ship's boat; but their son, a fine child, only two years old, was drowned with the captain and some cabin passengers; the lady had never left her room, nor indeed her bed, after they reached the island, and was soon after delivered of Jessy, who was but a fortnight old when her mother was buried. I never saw Mr. Malcolm after the night I spoke of, for on the day following we embarked for England, and I understood he was then too ill even to take leave of his child; indeed it was supposed he could never recover either his health or senses altogether, from heavy grief.—We had a short and very pleasant voyage; both Margretta and the children enjoyed perfect health; and when I have seen them both lying in her arms, I fancied there was no difference in the love I bore them. I should tell your ladyship we reached Spithead in safety, and the captain very kindly sent his boat on shore with us, giving  
orders

orders that we should be landed at Portsmouth. But we had scarcely left the ship half a mile behind us, when a strong gale blew up; Margretta was more alarmed for the children than ourselves, but as the sailors made light of it, and laughed at the danger, we proceeded on and reached the land in safety, when taking the two infants in my arms, and assisted by one of the sailors, I got on shore; another of the men helped Margretta, who was too frightened to move by herself, and indeed the squall continued to increase with violence. Only two of the sailors and the cabin-boy, who was sent on shore for errands, remained in the boat, and he was desired to bring my little box with him. In the confusion of the moment, and thinking only of the children and my wife, I forgot I had any thing of value to preserve beside, till I heard with horror that the lad had missed his step in springing from the boat, and to preserve himself, had let go the box,



box, which no one had power or presence of mind to save.

“ I had, then, landed in England, where I was quite a stranger, with a wife and two children; not an article of clothes for either, save what each had on their backs, and a few articles Margretta had tied up in a handkerchief she herself carried, and a sum of money scarcely sufficient to carry us on our way. But this was nothing to the loss of my letter, which was to direct me to Mr. Malcolm’s friend, for I remembered only that the gentleman’s name was Ainsley, and that he lived in London: the first I had looked at when putting it into my box, and my orders were to proceed to London as soon as possible on my arrival in England; but I had never noticed the street in which he lived, nor the number of his house, without which I too late found it would be impossible to find him out. I was therefore in one unfortunate moment deprived of all  
means

means to fulfil my solemn engagement. The transport was not going back to the West Indies, and I had no one to advise with how I ought to act; but at last Margretta persuaded me, that as I had not brought the misfortune on myself, it was wicked to grieve as I then did; that it was most likely, as Mr. Malcolm was so ill with the fever when we left, that he would never live to hear his child had not been conveyed to his friend; and that all we could now do was to bring it up as our own, and take the greatest care of the seal, which might one day lead to a discovery of her real friends, when we could prove our own innocence by the care we had taken of Jessy, for whom she was very willing to work; and that God Almighty, knowing our hearts, would give us health and strength to procure an honest livelihood, she had no doubt.

“There was some truth in her reasoning, and by degrees I grew less unhappy.

py. We had formerly left some good friends at Burroughness, and determined to proceed there as soon as possible; but they were all dead, or removed to other parts of Scotland; and after living there about four years, we removed to our present dwelling, where we found a friend indeed in Mrs. Duncannon. Jessy very soon became her greatest favourite; but I had never mentioned to madam a word of her birth or story, because as yet I saw no end it could answer, and I was always fearful of Jessy's finding out I was not her father; for my own heart always upbraided me for not having given Edward to the sailor's care, and taking both Jessy and the box myself; but nature prevailed, your ladyship, in the moment of danger."

The sunburnt hand of Donald was passed hastily over his eyes as he spoke, for at that moment a painful remembrance of his banished child glazed his aged eyes

eyes with tears, and plainly told that nature now, as then, prevailed in his paternal feelings.

Ashamed of the weakness he wished to conceal, in hurried accents he continued—"I was returning from my labour at the time one of lord Malcolm's carriages was passing onward to the castle when he first arrived, and where I had for some time heard his lordship was expected; yet I had never for a moment thought Mr. Malcolm could have belonged to such a great man, when he was himself only a subaltern, and thought to be very poor; but just as I came up to the coach, some part of the harness gave way, and the coachman begged me to assist him in putting it to rights. When I had done so, his lordship, who was inside, beckoned me to the coach, and gave me a piece of silver for my trouble; but at that moment I cast my eye upon the door, and saw a figure painted so exactly like that cut

on my seal, that I stood with my cap in my hand for some minutes after the carriage had gone off. For the first time it came into my head that lieutenant Malcolm might be the son they said his lordship had disinherited, and I returned to my house more uneasy than ever. After passing a restless night, I determined to acquaint Mrs. Duncannon with the whole business, and ask her how I should act. She agreed with me in thinking it was very likely lord Malcolm might be related to Jessy, but was of opinion all should be left to time, promising, whenever an opportunity offered that could prove serviceable to the child, to come forward herself on my side, with every assistance in her power, to vindicate what she was pleased to call my worthy conduct.

“ Quite satisfied she knew best, I left her with a light heart ; but her departure threw me again into trouble, till she promised to leave a letter with me,  
which

which might answer every purpose, if I was indeed called upon by any chance to make my story known. That time, your ladyship, is now arrived, and I must depend on your advice how I am to act with Mr. Sinclair, as he is determined to take no denial, and I have no longer an excuse to make, without telling the real truth; for I could neither deceive him nor your ladyship."

Fully satisfied with the authenticity of the detail he had given her, lady Madeline assured him she could not for a moment doubt Jessy's relationship to herself and family, but that as Mrs. Duncannon had requested nothing might be done hastily, she would take a short time to determine on the most proper steps to be taken, when he should be made acquainted with her determination; and that with respect to her son, he need be under no farther apprehension, as she would herself see him,



and adjust the business before there was a necessity for his answer being given.

Every thing thus settled to the satisfaction of Donald, he returned once more to his cottage, in part relieved from the oppressive secret which, as Jessy advanced in years, daily increased his anxiety for her future welfare, and in firm confidence that the period was at hand when Providence would be manifest in the orphan's cause; for such he firmly believed her to be, from the account he had heard of her father's situation when he left Martinique.

## CHAPTER VIII.



WHEN lady Madeline again joined her young friend, a thousand new sensations crowded on her affectionate mind: hitherto she had loved her from those interesting traits in her character which it was impossible to know with indifference: as the supposed child of her unfortunate brother, she was already become inexpressibly dear to her. How gladly would she have folded her in ecstasy to that heart which throbbed, not only to own its affinity, but to explain to the obdurate lord Malcolm, that she was too probably the only vestige of his once idolized son—that she for whom that son had forfeited every claim

to his paternal love and princely inheritance was numbered with the dead—and that, if Alphonso did indeed exist, he was perhaps a wretched maniac in a foreign land !

Agonized by the reflection, unbidden tears suffused her lovely eyes, and Jessy impatiently demanded what new cause of uneasiness had rendered her so unhappy.

Glad of any subject that might rescue her from the error into which her susceptibility had so rashly hurried her, she unconsciously chose that which tended to turn her own embarrassment to her *protégée*, by naming the confidence Sinclair had reposed in her. “As his mother, Jessy,” she said, “I am deeply interested in his happiness; and as a friend who loves you with much more than common affection, I am not less anxious to promote yours; but, if I can read your heart, its sentiments are not reciprocal with Frederick’s, or you have been  
less

less candid with me; for, shall I own to you, I have of late believed that even the common attention you paid him was more out of respect to me than himself; and yet Frederick loves you to adoration."

Conscious that her ladyship's surmises relative to her indifference were just, yet unwilling to wound the feelings of so fond a mother, she had studiously endeavoured to conceal the repugnance she felt, even to seeing him, and which amounted almost to aversion; but as the rectitude which governed all her actions refused, thus called on, to veil her real sentiments at the expence of truth, she remained silent; while her ladyship, anxious to ascertain if that silence was purely the effect of her natural timidity, or the result of a concealed affection for Frederick, which the difference of their situation taught her the necessity of confining to her own breast, continued—"Will you, my dear Jessy,

empower me to give him those hopes which I know are essential to his peace? or must I tell him," she added, forcing a smile, "that you have no heart to give?"

There was a name so connected with the finer feelings of Jessy's heart, so dear to her remembrance, that they could not fail to vibrate on the slightest touch; and the oblique hint of lady Madeline, who at that moment was thinking too much of her worthless son to recollect the noble Seymour, sufficed to heighten the blush which her first question had called to the cheek of Jessy, who modestly replied—"I value your ladyship's friendship too highly to forfeit it by the presumptuous love Mr. Sinclair demands in return for that he is pleased to say I have inspired him with; for his avowal to your ladyship obliges me to acknowledge he has offered me his hand, and I had hoped my decided answer would have prevented his troubling you with a subject

ject which cannot fail to add to the many anxieties you have to encounter; but of this be assured, the humble Jessy, sufficiently honoured by your protection, will never reward you by ungratefully marring your son's prospects in life; much less can she ever promise to avow an affection she has as yet never felt for him."

"But tell me," she said, when Jessy had ceased speaking, "if your situation in life were not so different, if Frederick had no title in expectation, or that you had one equal to his own, would he have no room to hope?"

"None, my lady," she replied with firmness; "as your son, I must ever respect him—gratitude for favours I owe to your goodness demands that I should do so, and for your sake am interested in his welfare, but it will never be in my power to promote his happiness. Your ladyship will pardon my being thus candid, but it is a duty I owe to your



goodness: may I, in return, entreat you to save me from the future importunities of Mr. Sinclair, by expressing your disapprobation of his conduct, and forbidding him, on pain of your displeasure, ever to renew the subject?"

"Then you do not wish me to name your own rejection of him?"

"Only," she replied, "as it is making me of too much importance: your ladyship knows my sentiments, and it is for you to disapprove so unequal an alliance, not for the lowly Jessy to boast her refusal of lady Madeline's son."

"Charming girl!" said her ladyship, as she folded her in an affectionate embrace; "were Frederick worthy of you, I should have an additional motive for the happiness which I at this moment feel in acknowledging——" Thoughtless lady Madeline! but prudence whispered—leave her while you are safe in doing so, lest, in expressing the cause of your own happiness, you for ever blight that  
of

of the innocent creature you are so anxious to serve.

The reproof was too just to be disregarded, and having said she must endeavour to reconcile Frederick to the disappointment of his fondest wishes, dismissed her for the night, and retired to her own chamber, to ruminate more largely on the particulars she had heard, and, if possible, to arrange some plan for the development of a secret which she found could no longer be concealed from Frederick, who, she believed, would readily enter into all her measures respecting Jessy.

At an early hour, therefore, on the following day, she sought an interview, and having minutely explained all that had passed between Donald and herself, impatiently waited for the expression of joy to which a discovery so unexpected must give rise; for Frederick had listened with more than common attention to the detail, and a new train of ideas at

that moment actuated his designing mind; but in vain his mother expected those congratulations which a generous spirit would have offered with avidity.

Some answer it was requisite to give when she had ceased to speak, and Frederick chose it should be that which might best conceal the chagrin he felt at finding there was too probably an existing rival to his own ambitious views, and that at least his nefarious designs respecting Jessy were frustrated, by a discovery that would render his mother more than ever watchful of her safety. Veiling, therefore, the anger he could but ill conceal, under the borrowed garb of unrequited love, he said—"Is it possible, madam, you have not sufficient penetration to read this well-concerted plan? are you really ignorant that Mrs. Duncannon, having designed her son should marry Jessy, has arranged her schemes accordingly, and now, with the assistance

assistance of her tool, Donald, who has, you perceive, been properly instructed in his part, thinks it will be no difficult matter to graft the scion of a rude cottage on the stem of a noble house? Nor will it be so, if the branches of that house could tamely submit to such an usurpation: as my wife, no one dare dispute her claims on the family of lord Malcolm, but I have his lordship's interest too much at heart to acknowledge the wife of Seymour Duncannon as your niece or his granddaughter, till I have much better authority for so doing than the simple, however plausible, narrative of an old soldier, and the well-penned letter of a woman I do not know."

"But I am well acquainted with her worth, Frederick," lady Madeline returned, "and can vouch for her character being far too exemplary to have sanctioned a fraud of any kind, much less that she should have degraded herself  
by

by becoming the promoter of one which could not fail of detection, when properly investigated; and without such an investigation, it was not possible to suppose Mrs. Duncannon could, for a moment, believe Jessy would be publicly acknowledged as a daughter of the house of Malcolm, since, passive as you believe your mother to be, she is not, be assured, less proud of that prerogative than yourself. You, however," she continued, "are to act as you may think proper—I shall henceforth regard her as the sacred relic of a fondly-regretted brother, committed by the unerring hand of Providence to my charge, trusting that something will even yet transpire to confirm her just right to my protecting care."

"And is it also your ladyship's intention to explain this mysterious business to lord Malcolm?" said the mortified Sinclair.

"In the present instance I do not think it would be altogether politic to  
do

do so," she replied; "but in the event of any account reaching him of the death of my brother, I am persuaded he would extend his protecting arm to the orphan-child of his once loved Alphonso, who will undoubtedly be entitled to those possessions of which her father has been so long most unjustly deprived. And yet I fear a confirmation of his death would be alike fatal to lord Malcolm; for there are times when, I am induced to believe, remorse is even now more predominant than anger in his gloomy mind; and a conviction that the victim of his resentment was for ever past his power—that the means of restitution were no longer his, might, in the present situation of his mind, endanger his life; for Alphonso's fault never merited his unnatural punishment, and this his lordship will severely feel, when it is too late to expiate his error."

"At least," thought Frederick, "the experiment shall soon be made; and I  
heartily



heartily thank your ladyship for having given me the important hint.”—“ My acquaintance with my grandfather renders me incompetent to judge how he would act on such an occasion, madam,” he replied, with a sarcastic smile, “ and must leave that point for time to determine; but you will pardon my saying, that neither Jessy’s refusal of me, nor her future prospects, be they what they may, shall deter me from persevering in my endeavours to gain her affections; for I will never tamely submit to the boyish pretensions of Mrs. Duncannon’s son, to whom, I know, she fancies herself engaged, from motives of gratitude to the mother.”

“ I very much doubt if your surmises are just, Frederick,” she replied; “ nor do I believe Jessy will ever be induced to yield to violent measures: her natural disposition is mild and placid—as such she is more easily won by gentle means, but she has a firmness of mind that  
would.

would enable her to resist compulsive measures. I shall, however, leave you a free agent, but must be permitted to say, that in the present situation of affairs, you are wrong to urge a point which might be settled more favourably on all sides when your relationship to each other is properly ascertained."

That Frederick had already determined should never be the case, if it was in the power of human invention to prevent it; but as his mother was the last person of whom he wished to make a confidant, he coolly replied—"He was rather less sanguine than her ladyship, but time would prove how far she was justified in believing all she had heard, as Mrs. Duncannon would doubtless return to hear the success of her well-concerted plan, whenever her friend Donald should acquaint her that it was expedient she should do so."

Irritated by his obstinate adherence to the side he had thought proper to  
take,

take, and which was so opposite to her own wishes, lady Madeline haughtily demanded that, allowing the whole to be as he had stated, a premeditated scheme of Mrs. Duncannon's, how the seal could possibly have fallen into Donald's hands?

An adept himself in every species of duplicity, Frederick saw no difficulty in procuring a seal with their family arms engraven on it, when Mrs. Duncannon had such a command of her pencil, and could herself give the design, particularly as such a proof would contribute so much towards substantiating the cause.

It was in vain her ladyship opposed fresh arguments—Sinclair was prepared to confute all she could advance; and they parted mutually dissatisfied with each other.

Lady Madeline retired to ruminate on her disappointed hopes, where she had fondly expected most support; and Frederick to seek his friend and counselor,

lor, Leopold, to communicate what had rendered him a restless being, and was to terminate in his becoming a no less guilty one.

When her ladyship met Frederick, her mind would have rejected even a doubt that might militate against Jessy's cause, for of every being connected with the narrative she had heard she had too exalted an opinion to hesitate placing unbounded confidence in their veracity; but such is often the force of persuasion from those we love, that no sooner had she, when again alone, reflected coolly on what had passed between them, and called to her remembrance the arguments her son had advanced, than a sensation bordering on suspicion imperceptibly intruded itself; she even ventured to ask her own heart if it were possible she could have been so much deceived? She remembered, with a heart-drawn sigh, her own inexperience of the world, and reluctantly admitted

mitted a belief that something bordering on imposition might lurk in the mysterious business; but Jessy, at least, was innocent, and still worthy the affection she felt for her. Again she referred to Mrs. Duncannon's letter, and blushed at the wavering irresolution of her own mind, for it contained no sentence that could be construed into self-interest, save by the man who did not hesitate to make it the foundation of his own ambitious views—plans which he had himself in contemplation, and to which he determined it should be a leading step.

Leopold listened with no less surprise than Sinclair had already done to the account he gave, but was prepared rather to confirm its authenticity, than, as Frederick had hoped, to disavow the whole as an idle fabrication; for when the latter, laughing at the absurdity, so palpable, as he pretended to suppose that of Donald having so clear a recollection of Mr. Ainsley's name, for which,  
he

he said, he might as well have substituted any other, since he neither chose to recollect the street nor number of his residence, he told him, that if he was as correct in every other part of the story, no doubt could possibly remain of Jessy being the child of his young master, since Mr. Ainsley was indeed the friend to whom he had been indebted even for support, previous to his leaving England, and that it was through that gentleman's means he had obtained a commission in a regiment serving in the West Indies, where he had most certainly gone, with his wife and child, which was, he understood, a son.

There was no disputing such information, and Frederick heard it with a degree of vexation which he wanted the effrontery to conceal. He at length ventured to ask, if it were probable that it could be proved his uncle was dead, what effect he supposed such a conviction would have upon lord Malcolm?

Leopold



Leopold readily answered—"He had little doubt but that his lordship's life would be the sacrifice, as the long confinement to which he had voluntarily condemned himself had already so much impaired his constitution, that he believed him incapable of sustaining any shock; and to that in question would be added a degree of self-remorse which could scarcely fail of endangering his existence."

"Nevertheless it is an event which appears too certain to be avoided," said Frederick; "and when it is remembered how much of your happiness, as well as my own, depends on the result, 'tis hardly natural, Leopold, with our passions, that we should pray for its being procrastinated, particularly when the miserable life his lordship has led for so many years must rather tend to render a release desirable to him than otherwise. As lord Malcolm, Jessy would no doubt gladly accept my offered hand; and I  
have

have every reason to believe lady Madeline would be less fastidious in her notions towards you, for I am more than half-convinced, it is rather out of awe of the old man, than from any dislike to you, that she deems it expedient to be thus stately."

Such an avowal was requisite to tranquillize the agitation into which the former part of Sinclair's speech had thrown Leopold, who, though he had so far transgressed his duty as a servant, was not yet lost to every sense of what he owed his lord. On one part only of his once unblemished character, when he first met Sinclair, a shade was unfortunately thrown, who, having too easily discovered where he was vulnerable, had never failed to profit by it. In ecstasy he now asked if it were possible he believed lady Madeline would ever regard him with complacency, when the death of his lordship might leave her at liberty to act for herself?

Sinclair placed it beyond a doubt, by  
falsely

falsely asserting instances of her favourable opinion of him, which he had never discovered, but which, conveyed through such a channel, could not fail to deceive the misguided Leopold, and render him more than ever the devoted slave of his base companion, from whom he did not part until they had jointly concerted a plan which was to give to each the object most desired, in the event of lord Malcolm's dying ignorant of Jessy's claims upon him ; and as Leopold promised to conceal every circumstance which might corroborate Donald's story, there was but little chance of its being ascertained from any other quarter.

## CHAPTER IX.



It remained only to copy the handwriting of Mr. Ainsley, and convey a letter to his lordship with intelligence of his son's death: this it was easy to do, for Leopold could command many letters in that gentleman's hand to his lordship, and the speculation was well worth the trial—but an incident least expected procrastinated the important plan on which they had so effectually decided.

The arrival of lord Stewart to take possession of Dunwarden Castle obliged lord Malcolm to make choice of a new residence, and preparations were immediately commenced upon for his removal to a family seat, not less retired, but far

less gloomy, because not so ruinous as that he was reluctantly obliged to relinquish.

The scenery around the castle was altogether picturesque, and appeared as if nature smiled in every direction of the beautiful vicinity, to relieve the traveller's eye, as he cast a mournful glance on the dilapidated structure. The site on which Tantallan Castle reared its lofty battlements was far less fertile, for at its firm base the stormy Forth rolled its mountain waves, and with stern aspect threatened that destruction to which the noble edifice as proudly bade defiance.

To this spot lord Malcolm, accompanied by lady Madeline, and, with his permission, the still supposed daughter of Donald, who, much as she was attached to her ladyship, reluctantly left the place endeared to her by the remembrance of so many past pleasures, and still more reluctantly she parted with the humble guardians of her infant

fant days, who, inconsolable for her loss, only comforted themselves with the belief that they had, in consenting to the separation, strictly fulfilled their duty; and the removal of lord Malcolm's family was at least attended with one satisfaction, inasmuch as that it relieved them from an inmate of whom they were long since become weary, and whose sight was even painful to them—for Frederick travelled in his lordship's suite. It was generally understood among the domestics that he was the son of lady Madeline, though she could not acknowledge him as such: the reason was obvious, for every servant of his lordship's household knew the peculiar delicacy of her situation, and all of them were too much attached to her to have risked a discovery by expressing their own surmises on the subject. But of the whole party, none more joyfully left Dunwarden Castle than Frederick, long since weary of the heart-broken creature



who, in the silent uncomplaining grief of her aged father, the innocent smiles of her hapless infant, daily read her own guilt, and was in consequence too deeply the victim of self-reproach to be any longer a desirable companion for her satiated and illiberal lover. But dreading lest she should yet discover the extent of his villany, by exonerating Edward—for cowardice is ever an attendant of guilty minds—he continued still to visit her occasionally, and in those interviews never failed to renew promises false as himself, to impose upon that credulity which he had found a too easy conquest; and he left her with an assurance that he would return, not only publicly to avow his affection for her by making her his wife, but also to acknowledge her little boy as his own; and, devoted herself to that child, even this the credulous Mary believed, or rather dared to hope it would be so, not for her own sake, but those still more dear  
to

to her than was now her own miserable existence.

Such an event promised to sooth the last moments of that kind father, who, although he had never raised his humbled head nor looked a neighbour in the face since Mary's disgrace, had never added to his child's bitterness of soul a reproachful word; it would rescue her infant from the infamy which she hoped would soon be buried with herself in the silent grave; but above all, it would prove how unjustly the worthy Edward had been accused, and establish his innocence in that little world, which had more bitterly inveighed against his perfidy from a recollection of his past character, which had, as they supposed, given him more power over the unsuspecting creature whom he had alike betrayed and deserted, but who, alone conscious of his innocence, asked only length of days to witness such a restitution; for too late she had discovered that the

phantom which, in the deceptive guise of love, had so effectually completed her ruin, was a transient illicit flame, which, in expiring, left the corrosive cruel conviction, that it had for a time subverted, but never wholly subdued, the hallowed passion which Edward had first inspired, and which still too powerfully pleaded his injured cause. She knew not that Frederick had long ceased to be his rival, and was already too much engrossed by a different pursuit to remember either her, his child, or promises; for Leopold repeated that the fatigue of his journey, and the sight of every thing around him in the place where his son had passed so many of his early years, had considerably increased lord Malcolm's indisposition, and that he refused to leave his room upon any occasion, nor would allow him to call in any medical assistance: this then was the moment which promised success to his worthless relative.

Leopold, encouraged by his pernicious  
counsels,

counsels, gave the reins to his presumptuous wishes, and added every thing to the distress of lady Madeline, by a mode of conduct which plainly convinced her his persecutions were not at an end, but from which she saw no mode of escape, except in acquainting his lordship with the duplicity of this his favourite servant, and revealing all that had passed; but in so doing, she must purchase her own peace at the expence of her son's interest.

There was little doubt of his being lord Malcolm's heir; but Leopold's representations of his character, with which she knew him to be too well acquainted, added to a knowledge of his having been brought into the family in a manner so clandestine, and decidedly against his strict injunctions to the contrary, could not fail to irritate her father, perhaps beyond the hope of forgiveness. Leopold's revenge might stimulate him to aggravate the cause, by rather adding to than concealing a foible of which he knew

Frederick possessed; and, dear as Jessy was to her, anxiously as she wished to be a means of reinstating her in her just rights, the mother prevailed too powerfully to urge her bringing forward these claims, to the exclusion of her own child, and still she hesitated how to act.

Not so Frederick: in arranging the order of proceeding, it was found requisite to remove so ostensible a witness of Jessy's pretensions as Donald, who having delivered his credentials, and so well secured the interest of lady Madeline in behalf of his daughter, would undoubtedly hasten to inform Mrs. Duncannon of his success, whose presence, with that of her son, would be requisite to carry on the farce; for as the truth must be inimical to him, he had resolutely determined to persist in believing the whole a vile falsehood; but as safety was best found in caution, he lost no time in securing the removal of Donald from his home, well aware his testimony could  
alone.

alone substantiate the authenticity of Mrs. Duncannon's letter, which would be produced, together with all the documents and witnesses who could be brought forward, when the news of his uncle's death was circulated, and which it was settled should soon be the case.

Donald, calculating from the time which had elapsed since they had heard from Jessy that they might expect a letter, and having gone to the market-town for some trifling errand of Margretta's, called at the post-office on his road home, where a letter awaited his arrival, but of a nature widely different to that his affectionate heart had expected; it had an English post-mark, and the postage paid, consequently could only come from his dear boy, or Mrs. Duncannon, who might have heard the family had removed from the castle, without knowing where they had gone to; and having cheerfully deposited the welcome epistle in his bosom, he trudged



homeward, gaily anticipating the pleasure Margretta would derive from its contents, be it from which it might. This, he thought, was all he wanted to know himself—a restless desire only just to discern the name became predominant; again he looked at the writing, but the hand was strange to him—Edward could not write himself, and might have got another of his shipmates to do so for him, but it was certainly not like that they had received before from him; the sides were held open, it was placed against the sun, then in the shade, but to no purpose—the folding was too neat to admit a possibility of discovering the desired name, save through the lawful channel, and this he would e'en venture to try, since it could not lessen Margretta's joy on hearing it read, and he would only just satisfy himself who it really did come from; but the seal violated, the charm was at once broke—Donald read a name he knew not; his  
eyes

eyes imperceptibly caught words of strange import—curiosity triumphed, and his bursting heart grew too large for his late peaceful bosom, which had throbbed against the unconscious letter with only joyful emotion. It was penned by a confidential friend and shipmate of Edward, and spoke of his being in a state of health that left nothing even for youth to effect towards its restoration, and all other help had been ineffectual; but it was thought he might nevertheless linger some months.

This alone was painful intelligence for a fond father; but Donald would have gratefully kissed the rod of affliction, which no other hand than his God suspended over him, had this comprised all he was destined to hear: his presence was entreated as essential to the eternal peace of his dying child, if what followed did not for ever exclude the fond hope on which more than his existence depended.—“And what, my poor boy,

could deter thy father, old as he is, from flying to thy comfort?" said Donald, justified, from his own feelings, in believing no father could measure the distance he was to travel when he carried consolation to a departing son, and that an only one—so good, so dutiful, but so unjustly persecuted as his had been; but when that son acknowledged a crime of which he had hitherto only been suspected, and of which he had so often most solemnly protested his own innocence—when he averred that he found it impossible to carry the corroding secret to an early grave, or die without hearing his father's forgiveness pronounced by his own lips, then it was that the struggle between nature and the integrity of an honest man became painful. Donald did not proudly thank his God that he had never been a seducer of innocence, nor injured another man by false accusation, as his child had done, to conceal his first crime; but, humbled to the dust,

dust, ardently wished his Edward had not been thus guilty, and as fervently implored Heaven to extend that forgiveness to him, which his own heart had already pronounced on the self-accused penitent, to whom he resolved to carry the consolation so ardently entreated.

But Edward had solemnly adjured his father, by the love he bore him, still to spare his beloved mother the painful explanation of his double crime—"In pity," he said, "confine the shameful secret to your own breast, at least till I am past the torture of knowing she has lived to hear her Edward could deceive so kind a mother. Give any reason but the just one for your absence, which will be but short. I have money to receive, which will be yours; and when you return to her with accounts of my death, she will forget to hate the memory of her poor Edward, in grief for his sufferings."

"Again falsehood!" said Donald, with warmth; "hast thou not already suffered  
enough,

enough, my lost boy, for the many thou hast uttered to conceal a crime? No, I will see thee ! but Margretta must know why I leave her."

But Donald was a Scotchman—he was also a soldier—and the pride inherent to his nation whispered the necessity of concealing, from those who had already judged harshly of Edward, this his own confession. Margretta's grief must have some cause, and the prying eye of curiosity would too soon discover their disgrace; his own actions had never brought contumely on his youth, and the proud spirit of the bearded veteran refused to become a subject of scorn for the errors of his offspring. Margretta was a faithful wife, a fond mother; but Donald recollected she was a woman; and even the obscurity of his past life had not rendered him a stranger to that odium attached to the sex through every class, nor had he sufficient vanity to believe he was himself possessed of that

*rara*

*rara avis* who could keep a secret, since early taught, what either all men are, or affect to be, that the wonder consists in a woman's doing so; and better, he thought, Margretta accuse him of an unkindness for a time, when he could hereafter justify the cause of his absence, than hear his neighbours call Edward a villain, when they pitied poor Mary.

Mournfully folding up the letter, he proceeded onward, with a heart heavily contemplating the journey he had to take, but which duty urged, and necessity hastened. Edward's letter was dated from a naval hospital in a seaport town in England. Provided, therefore, with a little money to defray his expences, and satisfied that, from their provident store, sufficient remained to supply Margretta with her accustomed comforts, he set out for England, without allowing himself time to deliberate, lest in so doing he should be tempted to reveal the contents of his letter to her, forgetting, in  
his



his zeal to save Edward from the stigma of such a transaction, the illiberal remarks which would be the result of his mysterious disappearance; nor recollecting, in the sympathy of his heart, that it would have been a more easy task to assign a probable reason for Margretta's grief while he was present, than she would find it to persuade her neighbours that Donald could have no motive at all for leaving her: he had, however, done so; and thus an important obstacle was removed to Frederick's unrivalled possession of his grandfather's property.

Since his arrival at Tantallan Castle, he had assumed a character altogether new to him, and professed so much contrition for many of those errors which had been productive of real grief to lady Madeline, that she became not only sanguine as to his future conduct, but also dared to hope he might yet be brought as warmly to espouse Jessy's cause as he had

had hitherto been determined to oppose it; nor was it less his interest to convince her this would ultimately be the case. With pleasure she listened to his altered sentiments on that subject, and as warmly expressed her happiness at the welcome change so evident in his own pursuits and disposition, which, she averred, was all the fondest mother could wish.

Frederick professed himself gratified by her approbation, but assured her it was to the excellent counsel and persevering entreaties of Leopold that she found him what he was, as, satisfied that little doubt remained of his being shortly proved the only heir of lord Malcolm, he had studied to render him every way worthy to succeed him who, had he lived, must have done honour to the title. "To Leopold, then, madam," he said, "be the merit ascribed, for to him alone you are indebted for the revolution in my nature, of which I am more than

than ever sensible, since it has contributed so much to your satisfaction."

Lady Madeline would have expressed her gratitude more warmly to any other person, because freed from the restraint Leopold's conduct had imposed on her; but to him the tribute was no less justly due for a point so essential to her peace. In the disinterested friend of her son, self was forgotten—she saw only the man tenacious of the honour of an imprudent headstrong boy, whom he had reasoned from his errors, and as such, expatiated largely on the sense of her obligation.

Leopold heard with ecstasy ill suppressed all she had to say, and his heart panted to name the return expected for such favours; but his faltering tongue refused to utter the sentence that might tend to extirpate the wavering hope which Sinclair found it expedient to keep buoyant, until the completion of his own plans might enable him to  
throw

throw off the mask assumed only for his individual interest; and he contented himself with saying, if his humble endeavours to promote her ladyship's comfort had been attended with success, he was richly rewarded by her condescending to think those services worthy an acknowledgment.

Frederick's next step was to feed the impatient ear of Leopold with a recapitulation of the high encomiums his mother had passed upon his admirable tuition of her recreant son; and having thus harmonized his feelings by hopes of which he was become too sanguine to see the fallacy, it was no difficult matter to urge on the point, which was to place Jessy in his power, as he affirmed, but which promised to his ambition a far richer harvest; for even desire had yielded to the mean resentment he felt against her for her firm rejection of him, and in which she still persisted, although he had artfully substituted  
every

every delicate attention, for the rude stare, familiar manner, and almost arrogant language, in which, considering her as a mere dependent upon his mother's bounty, he had been accustomed to address her; but the veil was insufficient to mislead her penetration: lady Madeline, blinded by affection, became easily deceived, but Jessy, scanning every action through a retrospective glass, in which she saw nothing to justify her opinion of the wonderful revolution, continued still to doubt its sincerity; but these sentiments were most carefully confined to her own breast, and thus guarded, she received his assiduities with the cool complacency that added fuel to his dark revenge, and which only wanted the opportunity, not the inclination, to retaliate.

The important letter was at last finished, but a reperusal of its contents staggered the yet wavering principles of Leopold. Again he surmised probabilities

bilities and improbabilities as resulting from it.

Frederick was prepared to combat every doubt: he possessed the talisman at whose touch fidelity, duty—in short, every requisite quality to exemplify the valued servant, had fled; one motive alone now governed every action—it remained but to name lady Madeline, and he was no longer Leopold.

Frederick repeated the vow he had made, so awfully sealed—Leopold's heart beat high as he remembered its import—the wary centinel, conscience, slumbered on his post, and that moment sufficed to betray the best of masters.



## CHAPTER X.



LEOPOLD conveyed the letter; and lord Malcolm, with trembling hands and quick respiration, opened the black seal. Ainsley's writing was familiar to him, but his letters, always severe, had for some years ceased; for this, therefore, there must have been a new motive, since for Alphonso he was well assured he would never plead again; perhaps he even wished he might have been induced to do so, since at that instant he felt that himself only wanted a pretext for struggling against the impetuous tide of resentment which had for so many years led every social virtue captive, and rendered him a morose tyrant, who  
wanted

wanted the resolution to throw off a self-inflicted bondage; but the power to do so was his no longer—the 'period of restitution to his injured child gone by for ever. Grasping the letter with convulsive emotion, he read a second time, almost without knowing he did so, the bitter, and to him heart-rending contents:

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“ Lord Malcolm may now emerge from that retirement to which he has so long condemned himself, and again enter upon the busy world, without a fear of encountering the being so hateful to his sight—the lawful but exiled heir of his house and honours; for the world no longer holds a vestige of Alphonso, or his unhappy family, save their dust, which moulders in a foreign land: the sea, merciless as yourself, swallowed up the lovely boy who bore his name; Adela fell a sacrifice to the pernicious climate of Martinique; and

and despair consumed what disease had begun—Alphonso, without a tie to life, save my friendship, refused to live, and your reign of oppression has ceased. As his friend, I dare not justify your conduct towards him; as your's, I pity the years of remorse which await you, and which might have been spared, had you earlier attended to the advice of

“ AINSLEY.”

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Annihilation was at that moment the only blessing which would have been implored by the wretched father, had reason kept its seat; for the fortitude which might have enabled lord Malcolm to stem the torrent of accusing conscience had deserted him altogether, when he resigned himself to the uncontrolled power of passion and revenge, and the religion which would have done so, he renounced when he became the determined persecutor of such a son; for

for its divine precepts, its heavenly consolation, must be estranged from that heart which forgives not others as itself hopes to be forgiven; and it would be a mockery of its holy laws, a profanation of him who framed them, to ask that mercy we ourselves withhold. With the object of his unjust resentment had flown even the remembrance of it: no longer supported by bad passions, and without a resource to supply the vacancy, reason fled the contest, and left him in that state of mental derangement, which could alone promise a suspension of his wretchedness, by rendering him unconscious of it. For the varying sensations of passion, remorse, and returning affection, Leopold was prepared, since he had seen him under the influence of each by turns, and had little doubt but the latter would awaken every dormant sentiment of past affection; but to contemplate a passive maniac, lost to every sense of misery, and

calmly surveying the letter which had struck the blow, was a trial from which he shrunk in agony.

Smiling as he approached towards him, lord Malcolm motioned him, as if to secrecy, and having himself carefully examined the door, returned to the table on which the letter lay. "Can you keep a secret, Leopold?" he said, in a low whisper, "for I have an important one to tell you."

Leopold, with a heart too full for utterance, bowed his assent.

"Well then—they tell me Alphonso is dead!"

"I hope not, my lord," he replied, in faltering accents; "I hope not."

"Oh, 'tis very true," said his lordship, "for Ainsley says he is dead; and Ainsley always speaks truth. I did not always thank him for doing so, but now I do, because it will make us both so happy; for now I can settle every thing just as it must be, and only waited to  
tell

tell you all my plan, for I have it here," putting his hand to his forehead.

Leopold could only listen in silent agony; for the vacant look, the trembling kind of impatience he manifested in speaking, proved a melancholy derangement, that spoke daggers to his heart; and lord Malcolm continued—"Do you know I have deceived Ainsley and every body else, for they all believed I hated Alphonso? but it was no such thing—Poor boy! he thought so himself; but I shall soon convince him that nobody loved him as his father did, not even his wife, who took him from me. In an hour or two he will know all; and I shall see his sweet boy. Think you, Leopold, he will be glad to see his grandfather?"

"What do you mean, my lord?" said the distracted Leopold, apprehensive he was meditating some dreadful purpose.

"Why look ye," he replied, "when I  
L. 2 have



have given you every thing that should have been my son's, and made you lord Malcolm, which I mean to do—for I owe you all, I shall only want my small pistols, when you have cleaned them well; you understand me, Leopold—but be quick, for Alphonso will think me long in coming; and be sure you keep my secret, till you are certain they cannot detain me from him.”

Lord Malcolm's was now happy insensibility—Leopold's agonizing distraction: in this only lay the difference between them; for it was not possible the being who had become the instrument of such distress could calmly listen to unexampled proofs of generosity to the destroyer of his peace, from that master who, even under the influence of visible madness, remembered and wished to have rewarded him, and keep his own reason undisturbed. From his lordship it was possible to fly, and unable longer to bear his presence, he did so with precipitation;

cipitation; but the scorpion fangs of remorse followed him to his own room, where the first impulse was to close every remembrance of a transaction so destructive of his soul's temporal and eternal peace, by the very means his lordship had pointed out. Already his trembling hand grasped the instrument of death, and the desire to emancipate himself from the misery he found insupportable added eagerness to the preparation he was making for the fatal deed.

Affection for his lord even at that awful moment proved itself predominant: in an instant he recollected his death would give unbounded power to the man who had hurled him to the dreadful precipice on which he stood; too well he remembered how that power would be actuated when he was no longer present to restrain its effects. He dared to believe it might yet be possible to persuade his lordship the intelligence of his son's death might be errone-

ous—that even Mr. Ainsley might have been deceived; yet from a confession of his own guilt he shrunk appalled—but he would inform Sinclair of his own repentance, and determined resolution, not only to deny his belief of the intelligence, but also to make his lordship acquainted with the situation in which Jessy stood, as the only restitution now in his power, for a perfidy so severely and justly punished: and as eagerly intent on the good he purposed as he had been upon the bad, he returned to lord Malcolm, who, judging every thing was as his bewildered imagination now wished it, supposed he had only left him to procure the pistols, and had amused himself, during his absence, in preparing papers which he intended should place the claims of his faithful servant beyond even a doubt; and thus busily employed Leopold still found him, when he re-entered his room.

As if fearful of losing a moment, he  
said,

said, in hurried accents, scarcely daring to raise his eyes—"I have been thinking so much of Mr. Ainsley's letter, my lord, that I have really persuaded myself his information is altogether incorrect, and that——"

"Have you brought the pistols?" asked his lordship, interrupting him; "we will talk of Ainsley another time—now we have too much business, and I want you to read this deed," taking a paper from the table.

"'Tis impossible, my lord, I can do so, until you have heard what I have to say; for, supposing my young master is no more, I have proofs that he has a child still living."

"Pshaw! pshaw!" said his lordship, with petulance, "you mean Madeline's child, and he is a stranger to me. No, good Leopold—Malcolm has no friend, no heir but you; you have borne all his wayward tempers, and now he is be-

come a just man, he will reward so just and good a servant."

Leopold's bursting heart again smote him; but all depended on the present moment, and again he persisted in assuring his lordship, that he meant to say he was convinced, satisfied, not only that his beloved master had left a daughter, but that he could at that moment, with his lordship's permission, introduce her to him, and tell him by what means he had been made acquainted with her relationship to him. But in vain he argued—in vain pleaded claims of which his lord had no longer a comprehension; only two ideas were prevalent, and to these he steadfastly adhered—that of seeking his son in death, and giving his own large possessions to Leopold, whose next alternative was to seek Sinclair, and consult with him what steps he should pursue to effect the restoration of his lordship's senses, without which he found it  
would

would be impossible to endure the horrors of his own accusing conscience.

Frederick, who had impatiently waited for the promised interview, which was to make known the result of their scheme, was totally unprepared for the disappointment that followed. Had the grief it was expected must have been the effect of that letter reduced him to a sick-bed, Leopold was to name his being at the castle, and in due time have introduced him to lord Malcolm; and as we are ever too prone to arrange future events by our wishes, Sinclair had, in imagination, expedited those most favourable to his own, and actually prepared himself for the desired introduction. Lord Malcolm's too certain derangement, therefore, embarrassed him; but when Leopold, with a solemnity in his manner which astonished him, declared his intention of not only withdrawing his future assistance from the nefarious cause



he had undertaken, but to use every means in his power to set aside the letter by declaring his doubts of the information being correct, and that he was come to consult with him the best means of introducing Jessy, and relating her probable affinity to his lordship, than he became scarcely less under the dominion of madness than lord Malcolm himself.

Unaccustomed to control, or even to conceal, his ungovernable passions, when irritated, he set no bounds to the severity of his reproaches; but his power over the man whom he accused of tyranny, was, from an unexpected event, become altogether limited.

Leopold no longer remembered his fatal attachment to lady Madeline; or the presumptuous hopes he had entertained; the dreadful sense of his own deviation from rectitude, his base ingratitude to the best of masters, and the state to which his perfidy had reduced him,

him, alone occupied every thought; and to prove his sincere contrition, to restore, by every means in his power, the lost reason of his lordship, to do justice to the orphan-child of his young master, or to pay the penalty of his aggravated crimes by death, was become his fixed determination; and he had hoped, that no less intimidated than himself, Sinclair would have gladly given his support to the methods most likely to acquit themselves in part of the crime they had meditated; but deceived in this, he was himself firm, and steadfastly rejected the advice Frederick intimated of leaving all to time. Procrastination teemed with too many dangers: to survive his lordship would, he felt, be impossible, and that he already meditated his own destruction he had clearly seen; therefore, finding no chance of convincing Sinclair what they ought to do, he assured him lady Madeline's counsel

must direct him, for to her he should reveal the whole transaction.

Gladly at that moment would Frederick have for ever put it past his power to do so. One step only remained between him and honours for which his ambition would have thought no price too great, and all was to be marred by the pusillanimity of the being before him. The wish to have at once removed an object become so hateful, who having carried him to the summit of that ambition, those towering views he had so long contemplated, had then basely deserted him, reigned powerfully in his dark mind: his heavy eyes even rolled around him as if in search of means to do so: happily none presented itself, and Leopold, too much engrossed by his own reflections to suspect such a design, silently watched the evolutions of passion till they had subsided into that state of tranquillity which

which was the result of artifice, and not, as he had trusted, the conviction of his past errors. He was too much in lady Madeline's power to submit calmly to such a flagrant proof of his treachery and eagerness to succeed his uncle being made known to her; and having tried to convince Leopold that every means to render restitution, for what he termed their hasty folly, might be used without implicating themselves by owning any knowledge of the letter, which could be easily destroyed, he agreed to the plan of Jessy being introduced to lord Malcolm, but with a secret hope that his lordship would never, in his present state, be brought to acknowledge her; and trusting the blow, though differing from what he had expected, would nevertheless be effectual, it remained only to acquaint lady Madeline with the sudden and unexpected insanity of her father—to suggest the propriety of trying what effect might be  
the

the result of endeavouring to make him acquainted with the probability of Jessy's affinity to him, by introducing her as the child of that son of whose death they might state the too great probability.

Estranged as was lady Madeline, from the unnatural conduct of lord Malcolm, she would have seen the prospect of his death with that sincere affliction her duty as his child demanded, but the account of his derangement was a source of real grief.

Leopold had commissioned Sinclair with the intelligence to her ladyship, promising to join them when he had again visited his lord, whom he found pacing the room with unequal steps, and apparently deeply ruminating; but the vague answers he returned to every question proved no alteration had taken place that might for an instant promise what he so anxiously anticipated—one spark of returning reason. Too late the unjust servant had returned to a sense of his duty—too late discovered, from  
the

the barbed arrows of conscience, that one false step, one deviation from the path of rectitude, is too often followed by errors of which, in the first instance, we are least aware—that hurried onward, we forget the road from which a false meteor has lured us, and seldom stop until convinced of our danger by some fatal action never to be retrieved; then it is we remember with bitterness of soul the paths for ever closed upon us.

The papers on which lord Malcolm had been so intent were still scattered on the table, where also lay the fatal letter, on which Leopold's eyes rested with horror. His lordship appeared alike unconscious of both; he seemed little inclined to talk, and when he did so, nothing could be more irrational; a deep melancholy pervaded his features, and Leopold fancied a degree of heaviness in his eyes which foreboded increasing indisposition. To his entreaties that he would retire to his bed, he made no resistance;



sistance; and when he proposed lady Madeline's visiting him, said—"I don't know lady Madeline, but if she is your friend, I will see her."

This vague reply left little to hope on Jessy's account, but intent on the expedient, he flew to entreat her ladyship would not only go herself to his lordship's room, but take Jessy along with her. To do this, it was requisite to explain, at least in part, the surmises of her relationship to the family, and in doing that, she must act contrary to Mrs. Duncannon's wishes, for there was still no clue to prove the reality of her claims, and to which her youthful imagination would doubtless gladly aspire. But for this difficulty Frederick had a ready expedient; it was to reveal to Jessy the necessity of endeavouring to awaken lord Malcolm's feelings, if possible, by naming any object connected with his son; and as it was to be merely an experiment, to prevail on her to  
join

join in the deception, by allowing herself to be introduced as his child; after which the explanation might follow, whenever circumstances rendered it expedient.

To this plan, as there was no time to lose, Leopold readily assented, and as anxiously awaited the result.

Lady Madeline having previously dispatched a messenger for a physician, attended by Jessy and Leopold, visited her father, determined, in the event of his recognizing herself, and receiving, as she wished, the orphan child of her brother, to entreat an interview for her beloved Frederick.

To her affectionate inquiries after his health he made no answer, but fixing his eyes steadfastly upon Jessy, beckoned Leopold to him, and inquired who she was? Now then, he thought, is the moment on which all depends; the prayer for success to his sanguine wishes, and which he had not time to utter, passed  
in

in his aching heart; but the mercy he solicited was denied. With an agitation which could not escape lady Madeline, but which she attributed to affection for his lord, he replied—"It is, my lord, the daughter of my dear young master; as you loved him, receive her for her father's sake."

"Tell me," he said, quickly, "where did she leave her father?"

Unprepared for the question, and wishing to evade even a surmise of his death, each for a moment looked at the other in silence, when, as if enjoying the embarrassment into which his interrogatory had thrown them, with a loud convulsive laugh, he exclaimed—"You cannot deceive me—my Alphonso left no child to the care of his bereaved father, else would he have come himself."

Jessy, terrified by a laugh so unnatural, and distressed to stand, as she believed, a confirmed impostor, in the presence of that man of whom, even in health, she

she had so insurmountable a dread, incapable of commanding her wounded feelings, burst into tears.

His lordship's countenance in a moment changed to the expression of pity, and in a tone of agitated sympathy he said—"Poor child! perhaps she has a father, though he is not my Alphonso."

Throwing herself on her knees beside his bed, and fondly taking the trembling hand stretched on the coverlid, lady Madeline replied—"Will you not believe your Madeline, my father, when I assure you she is indeed the child of your poor Alphonso, my lamented brother? I have long known her to be such, and only wanted the power and opportunity to convince you that she must be your grandchild."

"Softly, softly," said his lordship, putting his hand to his forehead, "let me read Ainsley's letter again. Leopold," he continued, "mark you well  
if

if Ainsley names a daughter, for I cannot read just now."

The very appeal had harrowed the guilty penitent; but when lady Madeline's up-raised eyes seemed to demand an explanation of her father's words, his motionless limbs refused to aid the escape he would so gladly have made to evade the task imposed upon him, for the letter he had already destroyed, and to satisfy her ladyship's inquiring looks was impossible.

Happily for him, the dreadful chaos of lord Malcolm's mind left no idea sufficiently connected to remind him of the order he had given. His eyes, apparently intent on Jessie's motion, had followed her to the window, where, with averted face, she concealed the tears which still continued to relieve her oppressed feelings, but could ill suppress the sobs which arrested his attention, and appeared to interest him.—“What  
is

is her name?" he inquired of lady Madeline, as she yet knelt by him.

"Jessy," replied her ladyship.

"Poor Jessy!" he returned, mournfully, "why does she weep? Is Mrs. Duncannon dead too?"

Transported at a question which proved a gleam of recollection, and anxious to profit by even the shadow of hope, Leopold eagerly replied—"Jessy's tears are not shed for Mrs. Duncannon, but for your lordship. She is distressed to see your lordship so unwell, and more so that you will not own her as your relation, for she is indeed, my lord, the daughter of my dear young master, your son."

"Ainsley says so, does he?" said lord Malcolm.

Leopold, still resolute in the cause, answered in the affirmative, but no expression of pleasure at the intelligence marked his lordship's feelings: he coolly replied—



replied—"Then we must provide for her."

At that moment the doctors were announced, and lady Madeline retired with Jessy to her own apartment, where she determined, be the event what it might, in justice to her young friend no longer to conceal the various circumstances which had combined to justify her belief that she was really, as they had endeavoured to convince lord Malcolm, the daughter of his banished son; for the agitation into which the unexpected indisposition of her father had thrown her, and the succeeding interview, had rendered the consolation of some tenderly-interested being more than ever necessary; and she felt that her own acknowledgment of Jessy's affinity would be a relief of which her burthened heart stood much in need. Having therefore prepared her for the development of Donald's narrative, by the purport of

Mrs.

Mrs. Duncannon's letter, she closed the interesting detail, by an assurance of her own conviction that Jessy was the child, perhaps the orphan one, of her beloved brother, and added her determination of using every means in her power to obtain such proofs as were alone wanting to substantiate her just claims to her father's property, in the event of lord Malcolm's decease.

END OF VOL. II.

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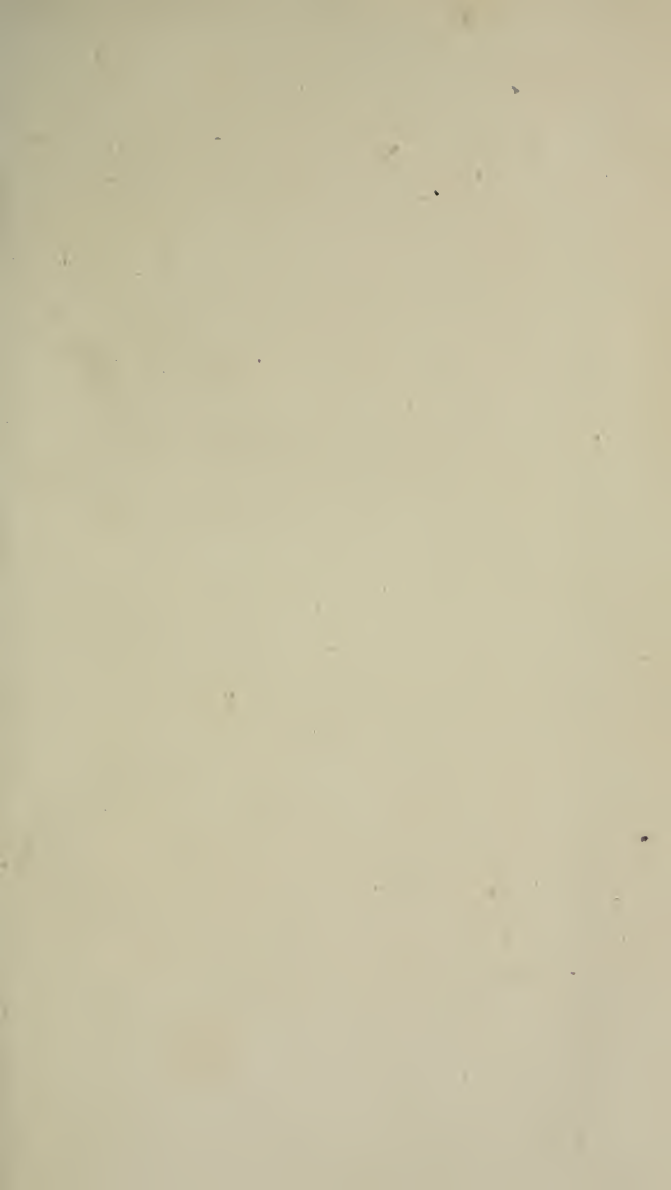
*Minerva Press,*

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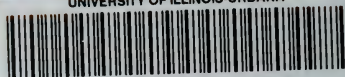








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